MEDITATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN

First printed - 1910
Second impression 1928

Nihil Obstat.

INNOCENTIUS APAP, O.P.,
Censor deputatus.

Imprimatur.

EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius Generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 22 Aprilis, 1910.

Made and Printed in Great Britain

APR 30 1941

MEDITATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN

FOR THE USE OF THE CLERGY AND FAITHFUL

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

By A. VERMEERSCH, S.J.
Professor of Theology

Translated by
W. HUMPHREY PAGE, K.S.G.
PRIVY CHAMBERLAIN TO H.H. PIUS X.

VOLUME II.

MEDITATIONS FOR THE SATURDAYS OF THE YEAR AND SUPPLEMENTARY PART

FR. BENEDICTUS M. BLANK, O.P.
ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

Property of
COSA
Please return to
aduate Theological
Union Library

LONDON
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.
PUBLISHERS TO THE HOLY SEE

APPROBATIONS OF THE BISHOPS OF BELGIUM

We have read with edification the first volume of "Meditations on the Blessed Virgin," for the use of the clergy and the faithful, by the Rev. Father Vermeersch.

The author's interesting notes on the origin and meaning of the different festivals of the Blessed Virgin, and the sublime and beautiful meditations which he proposes for each of these festivals, and for each day of the month of May, constitute a most useful book, calculated to instruct the pious reader, and to foster a solid devotion towards the Mother of God.

We do not hesitate to recommend it most warmly to the priests and the faithful of our diocese.

✠ P. L., Cardinal Goossens,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

Mechlin,
May 14, 1905.

We earnestly recommend to the clergy and the faithful of our diocese the "Meditations on the Blessed Virgin," by the Rev. Father Vermeersch, S.J.

3660

They are admirably adapted to make the Mother of Our Lord better known, honoured, and imitated.

✠ Ant., Bishop of Ghent.

Ghent,
May 1, 1905.

Reverend Father,

I thank you for the copy of your "Meditations on the Blessed Virgin" that you have been good enough to send me. I am delighted with the work. In all your writings sound theological teaching is united to attractiveness of style, and you present your arguments with such order and method that they are always easy to follow. I recommend your book with great pleasure, and hope to see it attentively read, especially by my priests, who will find in it an abundant source of edification, and will make use of it to stimulate the love and devotion of their congregations towards the Blessed Virgin, who is always the hope of Christians.

✠ C. G., Bishop of Tournai.

Tournai,
May 7, 1905.

Reverend Father,

I thank you for sending me your "Meditations on the Blessed Virgin."

By publishing them you have conferred a great

boon on the clergy and the faithful, who will find in them material to quicken their devotion and increase their knowledge of the Blessed Virgin. Preachers especially will have at their disposal an abundant source of instruction on the feasts of Mary, her life on earth, and her glory in Heaven.

Everyone who has read your "Meditations on the Sacred Heart" will desire to possess your latest work, and I am sure it will have a great success, and will spread more and more widely that devotion to the Mother of God which is so necessary and so consoling to all the faithful.

That will be your best reward.

✠ Th. L., Bishop of Namur.

Namur,
May 24, 1905.

Reverend Father,

I have received the book on the Blessed Virgin which you have been good enough to send me, and I thank you for it sincerely.

After having attentively read several of the Meditations, I concur in the commendation expressed by the Bishop of Bruges. Your volume is most edifying and instructive; it is based upon Holy Scripture and Catholic theology, and cannot

fail to stimulate the devotion of the faithful to the Blessed Virgin. You have done most excellent work by its publication.

✠ M. H., Bishop of Liège.

Liège,
May 15, 1905.

Note.—The approbation of the Bishop of Bruges is prefixed to the first volume.

INDEX OF MEDITATIONS

THIRD PART

MEDITATIONS FOR THE SATURDAYS OF THE YEAR

PAGE

PRELIMINARY REMARKS - - - - - 1

FIRST SECTION

THE GRACES OF MARY - - - - - - 5

FIRST SATURDAY: THE ELECTION OF MARY, CONSIDERED IN GOD, HER CREATOR - - 5

SECOND SATURDAY: THE ELECTION OF MARY TO THE DIVINE MATERNITY - - - - 8

THIRD SATURDAY: THE PRIMOGENITURE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 18

FOURTH SATURDAY: THE PREDESTINATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 25

FIFTH SATURDAY: THE SANCTIFYING GRACE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 30

SIXTH SATURDAY: THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - 38

SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE DIVINE MATERNITY AND SANCTIFYING GRACE - - - - 45

EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE INFUSED VIRTUES AND GIFTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - 50

NINTH SATURDAY: THE PRETERNATURAL GIFTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - 55

PAGE

TENTH SATURDAY: THE GRACES GRATUITOUSLY GIVEN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - 60
ELEVENTH SATURDAY: THE ACTUAL GRACES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 65
TWELFTH SATURDAY: THE SACRAMENTAL GRACES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - 71
THIRTEENTH SATURDAY: THE SINLESSNESS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 75
FOURTEENTH SATURDAY: THE LIBERTY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - 80
FIFTEENTH SATURDAY: THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - 85

SECOND SECTION

THE VIRTUES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - 91
SIXTEENTH SATURDAY: THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - 91
SEVENTEENTH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE MERITORIOUS LIBERTY OF THAT FAITH - - - - - - - 96
EIGHTEENTH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE GLORIOUS HUMILITY OF THAT FAITH - - - - - - 102
NINETEENTH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE TRIALS OF THAT FAITH 110
TWENTIETH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE TRIUMPHS OF THAT FAITH - - - - - - - - - 114
TWENTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE DAILY PRACTICE OF THAT FAITH - - - - - - - - 119
TWENTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF THAT HOPE - - - - - - - 123
TWENTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE BEAUTY AND USEFULNESS OF THAT HOPE - - - - - 129

PAGE

TWENTY-FOURTH SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE TRIALS OF THAT HOPE 132

TWENTY-FIFTH SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD — THREE TEMPTATIONS AGAINST HOPE - - - - - - 137

TWENTY-SIXTH SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE FRUITS OF THAT HOPE 144

TWENTY-SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY - - - - - - - - 149

TWENTY-EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE TOUCHSTONE OF CHARITY 154

TWENTY-NINTH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD TOWARDS MEN—THE EXTENT OF THAT CHARITY - - - - - 157

THIRTIETH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—CHARITY VICTORIOUS OVER SELFISHNESS - - - - - - - 162

THIRTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—CHARITY AND THE OTHER VIRTUES - - - - - - - - 166

THIRTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE HUMILITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE BEAUTY OF THAT HUMILITY - - - - - - - - 171

THIRTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE HUMILITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD—THE ADMIRABLE EFFECTS OF THAT HUMILITY - - - - - - - 175

THIRTY-FOURTH SATURDAY: THE PRUDENCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - 180

THIRTY-FIFTH SATURDAY: THE RELIGION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - - 186

THIRTY-SIXTH SATURDAY: THE JUSTICE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - - 192

THIRTY-SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE TEMPERANCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - 196

THIRTY-EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE VIRGINITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - 201

PAGE

THIRTY-NINTH SATURDAY: THE FORTITUDE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 207

FORTIETH SATURDAY: THE MEEKNESS AND PATIENCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - 211

THIRD SECTION

THE GLORIES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - 216

FORTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE MORAL BEAUTY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - 216

FORTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS INCORRUPTIBILITY OF THE BODY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - - 222

FORTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE ESSENTIAL GLORY OF THE SOUL OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - 228

FORTY-FOURTH SATURDAY: THE PERFECT GLORY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD IN SOUL AND BODY - 232

FORTY-FIFTH SATURDAY: THE TRIUMPHS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD OVER HELL AND IN THE WORLD 238

FORTY-SIXTH SATURDAY: THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL MATERNITY - - - - - 243

FORTY-SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE GLORY OF MARY'S SUPPLIANT OMNIPOTENCE - - 252

FORTY-EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE MOTHER OF GOD A FIGURE OF THE CHURCH - - - 261

FORTY-NINTH SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS PLACE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD IN HOLY SCRIPTURE - 266

FIFTIETH SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS PLACE OF MARY IN HISTORY - - - - - 274

FIFTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE EXALTATION OF MARY ABOVE THE ANGELS AND SAINTS - 278

FIFTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS RELATIONS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD WITH THE HOLY TRINITY - - - - - - 283

FIFTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS ETERNITY OF THE TRIUMPH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - - - - - - - 292

SUPPLEMENTARY PART

MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY GHOST, MOVEABLE FEASTS, ETC.

FIRST SECTION

PAGE

MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY GHOST - - - 299

PRELIMINARY REMARKS - - - - - 299

ARTICLE I. NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR PENTECOST - - - - - - - - - 300

FIRST DAY: THE OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF DEVOTION TO THE HOLY GHOST - - - 300

SECOND DAY: THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD BY THE HOLY GHOST - - - - - 308

THIRD DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE WORD INCARNATE - - - - - - - 314

FOURTH DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE CHURCH - - - - - - - 323

FIFTH DAY: THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE JUST - - - - - 329

SIXTH DAY: THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST, THE ADMIRABLE EFFECT OF SANCTIFYING GRACE - - - - - - - - 335

SEVENTH DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE BODY OF THE CHRISTIAN - - - - 343

EIGHTH DAY: DEVOTION TO THE HOLY GHOST, AND THE PRESENT TIME - - - - 349

NINTH DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND HIS THREEFOLD MISSION - - - - - - 353

ARTICLE II. MEDITATIONS FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST AND ITS OCTAVE - - - 359

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST - - - - - - 359

INTRODUCTION - - - - - - - 359

PAGE

MEDITATION: THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST - - - - - - - - - 360

MONDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST - - - - - - - 365

TUESDAY: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST (*continued*) - - - - - - - - 371

WEDNESDAY: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST (*concluded*) - - - - - - - - 377

THURSDAY: THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST - 381

FRIDAY: THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST (*concluded*) - - - - - - - - 385

SATURDAY: OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE HOLY GHOST - - - - - - - - - 390

SECOND SECTION

MEDITATIONS FOR VARIOUS MOVEABLE FEASTS - 394

FEAST OF THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH—THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER- - - - - 394

INTRODUCTION - - - - - - - 394

MEDITATION: THE REASONS OF THE PATRONAGE - - - - - - - - 396

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION—FORTIETH DAY AFTER EASTER - - - - - - - 402

INTRODUCTION - - - - - - - 402

MEDITATION: THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE MYSTERY - - - - - - - 403

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY—SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - - - - - - 409

INTRODUCTION - - - - - - - 409

FIRST MEDITATION: THE HOLY TRINITY IN CONNECTION WITH DOGMA, WORSHIP, AND HISTORY - - - - - - - - 411

SECOND MEDITATION: THE HOLY TRINITY THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH, OUR HOPE, AND OUR LOVE - - - - - - 417

PAGE

CORPUS CHRISTI—THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY - - - - - - 420

INTRODUCTION - - - - - - - 420

MEDITATION: THE COMMUNION, MASS, AND PROCESSION OF CORPUS CHRISTI - - 423

THIRD SECTION

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FIVE SUNDAYS AND THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS - - - 429

THE VOW OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS TO MARY IMMACULATE - - - - - - - 429

PRELIMINARY REMARKS - - - - - - 429

FIRST SUNDAY: THE DESIRE TO BECOME A SAINT 431

SECOND SUNDAY: DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN - - - - - - - - - 435

THIRD SUNDAY: THE SACRIFICE OF THE BODY AND THE SENSES BY CHASTITY - - - 439

FOURTH SUNDAY: THE SACRIFICE OF THE WILL 444

FIRST EXERCISE: FOR RELIGIOUS REGULARITY - - - - - - - - 445

SECOND EXERCISE: A LIFE OF PERFECT ORDER - - - - - - - - 449

FIFTH SUNDAY: DAILY HEROISM - - 452

FEAST OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS: THE HAPPY DEATH OF THE YOUNG SAINT - - - - 456

ALPHABETICAL INDEX - - - - - - . 461

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

MEDITATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN

THIRD PART

MEDITATIONS FOR THE SATURDAYS OF THE YEAR

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

I. Mary is the Mother of God ; but is she His Mother simply as other women have been mothers of illustrious men, benefactors of humanity ?

In that case her maternity would give her no merit, and the whole line of her ancestors would share her glory. Jesus would be the Son of Mary in the same manner as He is the grandson of Joachim and Anna.

Such is the Mother of God in the eyes of Protestants, but their heretical idea is repugnant to the whole theology of our justification ; and by their too literal interpretation of the text of Holy Scripture, and their disregard of the living tradition of the Church, they lose sight of the Divine economy of our redemption. No wonder that this mutilated and soulless religion has preserved

only a cold and colourless image of the Mother of God.

But there are some Catholics also who are imperfectly instructed in the truths of their religion, and whose ideas on the subject of the Blessed Virgin differ but little, though they may not be aware of the fact, from those of the heretical sects, and are inconsistent with the practices of Catholic piety. They are loyal children of the Church, and follow her in the honours that she pays to the Mother of God, but without realizing or even suspecting the full reason of this devotion.

They are ignorant of the place which Mary occupies in the Divine plan, and of the importance of the consent which she gave to become the Mother of God; and they are therefore amazed at the language of the Saints, and unconvinced by the arguments used in support of her high prerogatives, while the expressions used in the Liturgy appear to them absurd and exaggerated.

In these meditations we shall keep our eyes steadily fixed on the true picture of the Mother of God which the Church has received with the deposit of faith, which she preserves with jealous care, and which she studies with affection in order to discover new beauties and graces in it as the ages roll on.

The subject necessarily entails the consideration of arguments which may seem difficult to the understanding of readers who are unfamiliar with theology, but their attention will be sustained by the hope of acquiring a better knowledge of the Blessed Virgin and of Jesus Christ her Son, from whom she can never be separated.

Again, Mary, in her highest exaltation, is nearer

to us than her Divine Son. If, as the Apostle tells us, our predestination is modelled on that of Jesus Christ, it must still more resemble that of His Mother. The plan of our own sanctification will be unfolded before us in the same order as that of Mary is presented to our view. The reality which fills us with admiration for her will help us to understand the fulness of God's mercy to us, and the manner in which we must correspond with His grace.

II. Divine love chose the Mother of God, filled her with grace, and conducted her along the path which led to the Heaven where she received her crown. At the outset she was the object of God's choice, and received graces and prerogatives which were vouchsafed to no other. The path she followed was the path of the virtues, and it led to glory beyond compare.

The third part of our meditations will, then, be divided into three sections, treating of the *graces*, the *virtues*, and the *glories* of Mary. There is a close connection between them, for do not her graces and her virtues constitute her greatest glories? and, similarly, are not her glories and her virtues graces? But the practice of virtues introduces the element of a free co-operation, and in the glories the work of God appears to us perfectly accomplished. When we have studied the first beginnings of the career upon which Mary entered by the grace of God, we shall take pleasure in contemplating the height of glory to which she has been raised for ever by that same grace, seconded by her own will in perfect submission to the will of God.

III. It remains only to mention the theologians of whose writings we have made use in composing these meditations. St. Thomas, in the third part of his "Summa Theologica," has given us a complete statement of the teaching of the Church on the Blessed Mother of God. Among the most learned of his commentators is the Jesuit Father Suarez.

Besides, we may quote in historical order:

PASSAGLIA. *De Immaculato Deiparæ Concepti.* Rome, 1854.

MALOU, BISHOP OF BRUGES. *The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary considered as a Dogma of the Faith.* Brussels. 1857.

AUG. NICOLAS. *The Virgin Mary and the Divine Plan.* Paris, 1863.

A. HAINE. *De Hyperdulia ejusque fundamento.* Louvain, 1864.

SCHEEBEN. *Handbook of Catholic Dogma.* Fribourg, 1873.

TERRIEN, S.J. *The Mother of God and the Mother of Men.* Paris, 1899.

GENNARI, CARDINAL. *The Immaculate Conception of Mary.* Rome, 1904.

FIRST SECTION

THE GRACES OF MARY

FIRST SATURDAY: THE ELECTION OF MARY, CONSIDERED IN GOD, HER CREATOR.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—God is the beginning, God is the end, of all things. These two truths are the foundation of all moral life, but, alas! both are too often disregarded, and the first, perhaps, is the more generally and more completely forgotten. Let us endeavour to realize it in this meditation, which goes back to the supreme source of all the high privileges of Mary, the free choice of God. We shall see that the Divine election teaches us *a great lesson of absolute dependence and complete submission;* that it is *a transcendent honour for Mary and for us;* and that it procures *for God the homage of all His creatures.* In other words, it humbles us, it honours us, and it glorifies its Author. These will be the three points of this meditation.

MEDITATION.

"O homo, tu quis es, qui respondeas Deo?"—*O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* (Rom. ix. 20).

First Prelude.—Let us in imagination go back to the time, countless ages ago, when nothing was yet created, but God existed alone. Let us put aside everything else, and fix our thoughts on the infinite majesty of God, the plenitude of all that is good and perfect.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask for the grace to realize more fully the abyss of our own nothingness, in order that we may better fulfil our first duty as creatures.

I. The Divine Election a Great Lesson of Dependence and Complete Submission.

I. Let us try to imagine the innumerable multitude of possible beings in the presence of God. They are so completely non-existent that we can only think of them through figures borrowed from the real world. They are there before God, motionless and voiceless, unable even to plead their own cause, their appeal for existence. In this universal silence God hears no voice but His own. He wills and He creates. This is true of everything that is not God, and it is true of Mary. Our devotion would cease to be pleasing to the Blessed Virgin if we ceased to see in her a creature of no account in herself, and indebted to God for all the dignity and goodness that she possesses.

II. We, too, were created out of nothing. "*Quid habes quod non accepisti?*"—*What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7). What have we that we have not received from God, and what right had we to receive anything?

How many times have we disregarded this truth! We forget it practically every time we are well-pleased with ourselves; every time we give way to impatience, or wish the world other than it is by the will and permission of God; every time we murmur against men and things, His creatures.

II. The Divine Election the Highest Honour of Creatures.

I. The election by which God decides freely and in the exercise of His own Sovereign Will to create such and such a being in such and such circumstances is an eternal thought of God, and when there is a question of a reasonable being it is an act of Divine love, which is equally eternal.

Eternal thought: Mary is there in God, but how? Not as an image, taken from reality, but as a prototype from which the reality takes its origin—an ideal, a model, a prototype, which is identified with God, the Source and Model of all that Mary is to be. *Eternal love:* God creates the object of His own love.

II. Insignificant as we are, this same honour has fallen to our lot. Before we could know or love ourselves, before anyone in the world could give us even a glance or a thought, God knew us and loved us. Oh, the abyss of the Divine wisdom and love, great as the abyss of our own nothingness! Let us here pause awhile, and praise Him for His goodness.

III. The Divine Election the Source of Glory to God from All His Creatures.

I. If everything that exists, every principle and every quality of existing things, comes from God, as from its Source, it is clear that all things show forth the truth and the goodness of God. Every high privilege of Mary, every word of praise

uttered in her honour, is necessarily directed to this end.

II. If God is the end of all things, let us not be afraid to praise Mary. So long as we do not give her the supreme worship, which is due to God alone, to exalt the Mother of God is to glorify God Himself.

But at the same time we must understand that we have to thank God for all our advantages, all our talents, all our good qualities. Let us endeavour to give to God all that is His due by honouring Him in everything—not only in word, but in act ; by employing all we have and all we are in order to serve and love Him, and to make others serve and love Him. It is certain that all our good actions give glory to God according to the measure of their goodness. Let us, then, try to make them better and more worthy of Him, and offer all we have to His honour and glory.

COLLOQUY.

Let us bow down before God, and beg Him through Mary to give us perfect humility, and to accept the offering that we make of all we have and all we are, and let us glorify Him in His holy Mother.

Ave Maria.

SECOND SATURDAY: THE ELECTION OF MARY TO THE DIVINE MATERNITY.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The Divine maternity is the most sublime of the high privileges for which Mary was selected. It is that one of her

glorious predestinations which first presents itself to the mind, whether of the theologian who studies the designs of God, or of the simple believer whose piety is his guide. Mary is the Mother of God. We have been more than once already occupied with this great subject, especially in the meditations for the Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin, and that of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and it may be said that we shall never leave the subject ; for is not the Divine Maternity the cause and the explanation of all the prerogatives, all the graces, all the glories of Mary ?

According to the plan of this third part, we desire here to set forth more clearly and more completely all that is contained in the idea of *Mother of God.* We shall undertake this difficult task with humility, reserving new points to be treated of in subsequent meditations, because this immense dignity passes our comprehension, much more our power of expression, and we cannot include in one meditation all the thoughts that it suggests to us. Considering the grace of the Divine Maternity at first in itself, and then in its application to the chosen one and in its consequences, we shall see (1) *in what consists the grace* of the Divine maternity ; (2) how this maternity is, so to speak, *the stamp of the personality of Mary ;* and (3) what general view it gives us of *the past and the future of the Mother of God.*

MEDITATION.

" Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus "— The Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle (Ps. xlv. 5).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves the humble dwelling of Nazareth, visited by the Archangel Gabriel. Mary is saluted by the Angel with these words: "Thou hast found grace with God" (Luke i. 30).

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly ask that we may have a great reverence and love for the Blessed Virgin.

I. The Grace of the Divine Maternity considered in itself.

I. With the same sentiment of reverence which animated Moses when, treading on holy ground, he slowly approached the bush which the presence of God made to appear as if on fire, let us approach the Mother of God, the living habitation of the Lord.

1. Looking at her, as it were, from without, and by comparison, let us say to ourselves: (*a*) Besides the relations with God which our reason realizes as existing or possible, there are others of a higher order, the possibility of which passes our understanding, and which we know only by revelation. There are three—namely, the hypostatic union, the Divine maternity, and the sonship by adoption. Among these, the Divine maternity takes the second place. All at once the Mother of God finds herself exalted above the whole created universe, above all possible creations, excepting only the humanity of the Word. The Divine maternity is the greatest honour which can be conferred upon a mere creature. (*b*) The Divine Maternity could not be the reward of any merit.

We ourselves, though by nature unable to bear any fruit of salvation, are nevertheless enabled by grace to merit even the glory of Heaven ; but the dignity of the Mother of God is of a higher order, which this grace cannot reach. It was by a perfectly free gift of God that human nature was taken and appropriated by the Person of the Word. Similarly, no good works of Mary, though foreseen by Divine Providence, determined the choice of the Mother of God. If a special abundance of heavenly graces constituted the fit preparation of the chosen one, these graces are the consequence of the choice, and do not make that choice less a matter of free gift.

2. Let us now apply to the Divine Maternity what we know of the prerogatives of ordinary mothers.

(*a*) We at once admire the most marvellous of all the privileges of maternity, existing or possible —the privilege of bringing forth the God-Man. And by what means did Mary do this ? By the communication of her own substance. Let us think what this means. The mother in her own womb furnishes the matter which is incorporated in her son, or which (to speak more correctly) constitutes his body. In passing to the son, this substance preserves the stamp of its origin, and through all that he takes from her the mother follows her son, and perpetuates herself in his separate existence. All this Mary did in reference to the Divine Word, and so much the more completely inasmuch as Christ had no father among men. If she is not united to the Divinity, she furnishes the flesh which is so united. She passes

through something of herself into the Person of the Word of God, something which keeps for ever the seal of her own personality. In this manner, by a natural operation, Mary alone touches, as it were, the borders of the Divinity.

(*b*) In this wonderful child-bearing, with whom does Mary co-operate? Not only, like other mothers, with the creative action of God, which gives the soul. We know the ineffable mystery by which from all eternity God the Father has begotten the Word, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity. Mary gives Him her aid to give to His Word a *temporal* birth. It is impossible to conceive a more exalted office.

(*c*) The authority of eminent theologians leads us to the consideration of mysteries still more sublime. Let us remember first that in the case of married persons, besides relationship properly so called, which depends on consanguinity or community of blood, there is another relationship called affinity, which makes each of the two persons a member of the family of the other. As Mother of Christ, Mary is united to Him by the closest consanguinity. But, on the other hand, between the Word and His own human nature there exists a still closer and more perfect union, more indissoluble than that of any marriage. Instead of simply resulting in the moral union of two persons, this union appropriates to the Person of the Word the nature to which He is united. This nature is taken from Mary; it contains the blood of Mary. Can we not see the wonderful consequence? In exchange for the nature which He takes from her, the Word communicates to

His Mother an affinity with His Person, makes her a relation of His Person—that is, of God Himself. And in this affinity St. Thomas recognizes the reason of the high honour which we pay to Mary under the name of *hyperdulia*.

3. But the Maternity of Mary is not the result only, or even principally, of the action of Mary herself. It comes also in the first place from the Divine influence of her Son, which, descending upon her, makes her His Mother by uniting to His Divinity the human nature offered by the Blessed Virgin. The person of the Word is for Mary that of a bridegroom who dwells within her, and gives Himself as a Son to His bride. Mary is doubly united to Jesus Christ, first as Mother, then as Spouse. And the union of her created person with the uncreated Person of the Word is the most perfect image of the hypostatic union itself, joining the human nature to the Word who takes it upon Himself.

4. What sublime rights the Divine Maternity confers upon the Blessed Virgin! He whom His Divinity frees from all subjection really accepts all the duties which are imposed upon men by law or natural relationship. He submits to the directions and commands of His Mother during His childhood and His youth, and during the whole of His earthly life He accepts the filial duty of reverence and love.

II. What should be the result of these considerations, and others which present themselves to us, but to increase the respect and admiration that we vow to Our Mother in Heaven? And what task is more worthy of all our efforts? Let

us endeavour to realize (*a*) that no human tongue is capable of praising worthily the Mother of God ; (*b*) that all sin is incompatible with such a dignity as hers ; (*c*) that nothing which is necessary to exalt the Divine Maternity has been withheld from Mary.

II. The Divine Maternity as affecting Mary.

I. Our admiration of the Blessed Virgin Mother will be greatly increased when we realize that this incomparable dignity of Mother of God is not a mere adventitious quality bestowed as an accidental adornment upon a person whose destiny may be more or less sublime ; but that it has determined what we shall call the physical, moral, and supernatural construction of Mary ; that it enters into Mary's very constitution ; that it is a characteristic of her person.

In order that we may grasp this idea more fully, let us consider for a moment the manner in which other careers are decided upon. God places at the disposal of mankind a visible world, and a supply of strength, of talents, of natural inclinations and graces. Free, but under the guidance of Providence, men increase and multiply over the earth. From the alliances they form are born other men, endowed with different qualities of heart and soul, to whom this or that kind of education is given, in order that they may acquire the capacity for the employment or condition to which they are called. God, while leaving men to exercise their free will, takes care that these capacities are sufficient for the wants of the Church and of civil society ; and

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

prayers and good works may merit for a particular society or a particular epoch examples of devotion more numerous, more enlightened, and more sincere.

Thus it is that vocations are freely chosen by men, and yet at the same time providentially given by God. All are not apostles, nor all prophets, nor all doctors, but "all these things," says St. Paul, "one and the same Spirit worketh; dividing to every one according as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 11).

The more sublime the vocation, the more direct and exclusive is the action of God, and the less the vocation depends upon an arbitrary choice. Our Lord called His twelve Apostles, and said to them: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (St. John xv. 16). Yet it is correct to say that in the case of the majority of men this or that function has not been assigned to them by any Divine decree operating independently of their own free choice. Our Lord chooses His Apostles among those whom He finds possessed of the requisite dispositions; but the fitness to be chosen was not confined to those who were actually selected.

But the preparation of the Mother of God could not be left, so to speak, to the caprice of man or the hazard of circumstances; it could not depend on the fidelity of a daughter of Adam to graces shared by her with many others, however perfect that fidelity might be. Must not a special Providence watch over the physical formation of that woman from whom the Son of God was to take human flesh, in order to become the most perfect of men? Must not the same Providence search to

their inmost depths the elements of the natural character which this same Word derived from His humanity? And surely, in the supernatural order, an extraordinary choice distinguished Mary, and conferred upon her the graces reserved for her alone, graces which were suitable to her who was to be the Mother of God. As Adam was created to be the father of the human race, and could be nothing else; as the first woman was given to him to be his companion, and the mother of all living, and had no other vocation, so Jesus Christ was born to be the new Adam, the Saviour, and Mary was associated with Him to be the new Eve, chosen specially for this, and for no other purpose in the world. Mary alone could be the Mother of God; and if she were not that, she would not exist at all. Long before the mission of Gabriel the eye that could have seen the inmost heart of Mary would have recognized in her the future Mother of God. If her union with the Divine Word was celebrated in the mystery of the Annunciation, Mary had been from the first moment of her existence His glorious bride, anointed and consecrated by grace to be the Mother of God.

II. The lessons that we draw by analogy for ourselves will be most useful to us: by living good lives we render ourselves capable of great things; we enter into a condition in which a special Providence finds for us precious opportunities of higher and more extended influence. Let us not listen to the counsels of the flesh; let us unite ourselves as closely as possible to the source of all good.

III. The Past and the Future of the Mother of God.

I. 1. The *past* of the Mother of God is the period which preceded her Maternity. It follows from what has already been said that this past must have been composed of an unexampled series of graces and privileges peculiar to the person of Mary, mystically united to God, not by sanctifying grace alone, but by her vocation to the divine Maternity. These graces and privileges will form the subject of later meditations.

2. The *future* of the Mother of God is a universal sovereignty. Between these two great epochs, Mary may have been poor, may have passed her earthly life in obscurity; this was her state of preparation. But as Mother of God she sees all humanity, all creation, at her feet. Already Kings and nations honour her, while awaiting "the end when Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God and the Father" (1 Cor. xv. 24), and Mary shall occupy the place of honour among all created beings.

II. Let us carefully consider this general law. Even in the created world nearness to God confers a greatness which cannot be taken away. It is vain to seek any other greatness. The distinctions which God does not recognize and distinctly sanction disappear like the track of a ship over the face of the waters

COLLOQUY.

Let us renew our fervent congratulations to Mary with the homage of that reverence which is

deepened by our love and admiration, and let us make a firm resolution to unite ourselves more closely to God, who is the source of all true greatness.

Ave Maris Stella! Hail, Star of the Sea! This is our hymn of praise to the Mother of God.

THIRD SATURDAY: THE PRIMOGENITURE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—According to the well-known theologian, Scheeben, the idea of an only daughter of God, if properly understood, corresponds most adequately to that communion with God which Mary owes to her Maternity. For this reason we pass from the Divine Maternity to the consideration of that primogeniture which the Church recognizes in Mary, in applying to her the language used in Holy Scripture concerning Eternal Wisdom. We shall therefore consider in the first point *the primogeniture of uncreated Wisdom;* in the second, *Mary's primogeniture in respect of all creation;* and in the third, *her primogeniture in respect of men and of Christians.*

MEDITATION.

"Primogenita ante omnem creaturam"—First-born before all creatures (Eccles. xxiv. 5).

First Prelude.—Let us represent to ourselves the house at Nazareth at the moment when the Angel appeared in order to announce to Mary the designs of God upon her, and to proclaim her blessed among women.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask for the grace to know Jesus better, and to love Him more and more in His august Mother.

I. The Primogeniture of Uncreated Wisdom.

I. Let us rise on the wings of faith, and contemplate the ineffable mystery of the most Holy Trinity, not in order to comprehend what passes our finite understanding, but humbly to profess our belief in what God has revealed to us, and to find in the contemplation of this most sublime of all truths, however crude and indistinct our ideas may be, the principle of eminent holiness.

God is one in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three Persons are perfectly equal, having but one and the same nature and substance. Equal in all things, they are distinguished, the one from the other, only by the difference of their origin. The Son proceeds from the Father ; the Father and the Son form a single principle, from which proceeds the Holy Ghost. Our unassisted reason cannot comprehend this mystery ; all we know is that it rests on the very perfection of the Divine essence. Being infinite intelligence, this essence requires a Word ; being infinite love, it requires a Holy Ghost. The reason of these two processions of the Word and the Holy Ghost produces also the result that the Divine wisdom, though belonging equally to all the three Persons, is attributed in an especial manner to God the Son, as Divine holiness and love, though belonging equally to all, are attributed to the Holy Ghost. Lastly, we know that the second Person

of the Most Holy Trinity draws His origin from the Father by generation; and thence comes His name of God the Son, the first begotten of all the world. (*a*) He is first begotten in respect of all the works of God, of all creatures, of whom we speak metaphorically as begotten of God. (*b*) First begotten, not merely in the sense of existing before all created things, for that which is eternal is necessarily anterior to that which has its beginning in time, but in the sense that He had a share in the creation of all else. Not only did the Word *exist* at the time of the creation of all things, but all things were made *by Him. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil* (St. John i. 3). (*c*) First-begotten in respect of the natural and the supernatural order; and in each order; in respect of every virtue and grace, existing or possible.

II. 1. Let us adore in silence, and confess our nothingness before God, while we consider how the idea of primogeniture is realized more completely in God than in the created world. The eldest son of a family is not so by any natural or personal superiority, but by the simple priority of birth; while the first-born of God is the Infinite in comparison with finite beings. A man is the first-born of his family only in respect of a limited number of brothers or sisters, while the first-born of God is followed by a countless multitude of beings. The first-born of a human family contributes nothing towards the birth or the qualities of his younger brothers, but all creatures are the work of the first-born of God.

We may state as a special application of a general

truth that similar perfections are found in God and in His creatures, but in God in an infinitely higher degree.

2. Hence, when the choice is left to us, when we are able to see, to love, to possess qualities in God or in creatures, is it not the height of folly to ask them from creatures rather than from God? Let us reflect on the three kinds of gifts which we ordinarily seek for—*honour, joy, love.* How many men pass by the honour, the joy, the love that are found in God to seek the shadow of these gifts in what created things can give them! How many others would divide their affections between the Creator and the creature, as if the creature could add anything to the perfect happiness we find in the Creator! Let us, like the Saints, place all our hopes in God, and seek everything in Him.

II. The Primogeniture of Mary in Respect of All Creation.

I. 1. The Church applies to Mary the sublime language originally used of Eternal Wisdom. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived, neither had the fountains of water as yet sprung out; the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established; before the hills I was brought forth: He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers nor the poles of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was present: when with a certain law and compass

He enclosed the depths : when He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters : when He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits : when He balanced the foundations of the earth ; I was with Him forming all things " (Prov. viii. 22-30).

In making this application of the words of Holy Scripture, the Church evidently refers to the close union established between Mary and her Son, the sublime affinity of the Mother of Christ with the Person of the Word, and the moral union which results therefrom, and makes it permissible to glorify one of the two persons by the attributes of the other. But she declares at the same time in the most solemn language the primogeniture which belongs to Mary herself. In order to understand what this primogeniture means, let us glance at the other men whom God constituted His first-born.

2. Adam was the first-born among all men, created by God to transmit His human nature to all his descendants through the companion taken from his side : men, born of Adam and Eve, were to be the heirs of grace, and of a supernatural life, added to their own nature. Even for this supernatural life Adam, and Eve after him, were invested with a certain primogeniture. Abraham, the father of the faithful, who received from God the promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, was in this sense entitled to be called a first-born of God. But neither Adam, nor Eve, nor Abraham created the life which they had only to transmit ; they had received it, and

in transmitting it they simply fulfilled the condition or the law of a Divine inheritance.

Adam, by his sin, lost this supernatural life for himself and for his descendants. God, who from all eternity foresaw this fall, from all eternity preordained a marvellous redemption by means of His Son, God made man, a new Adam infinitely superior to the former. Jesus Christ, in fact, possesses in His Divine nature that supernatural life which was to Adam the free gift of God; and in His human nature He merits and causes all the grace which is given to men. All men are saved by virtue of His merits. Abraham himself owes it to his faith in Christ that he received the Divine promises. Jesus Christ, then, in the most complete sense, is the first-born of God for the supernatural life.

But He determined to have a Mother among men, and, to explain the Divine thought in human language, with the mystery of the Incarnation was conceived the type of the Mother of God. In virtue of her Maternity itself Mary occupies, after her Son, the first place in the Divine thoughts. She occupies this place in order to receive, through the merits of Jesus Christ, the fullest and most immediate participation in the supernatural life. She occupies it in order that she may be placed with her Son at the head of all the elect. And as everything is for the elect, so everything is for Jesus and His Mother. Created later in time than the Angels, than thousands of millions of men, than the foundation of the universe, Mary is, nevertheless, the first-born in the thoughts of God.

II. Let us, then, contemplate with wonder the high dignity of Mary, and offer our congratulations to our blessed Mother.

III. The Primogeniture of Mary in Respect of Men and of Christians.

1. The high dignity that we have contemplated in Mary constitutes her the first-born of all creatures. She is first in respect of the Angels themselves, because she is adorned with grace incomparably more abundant, grace which she has received in virtue of her sublime privileges, the Divine Maternity and her future sovereignty in Heaven.

But we must not forget the special relations of primogeniture which place Mary above men and Christians.

1. With regard to *men*, Mary, in bringing into the world the Author of all grace, exercises on the grace of all men a mediate but real influence, which completes her title to be called the first-born of all.

2. With regard to *Christians*, Jesus Christ has clearly realized in Mary the perfection of Christianity. He has made her the perfect model of all Christians, and she is in a certain sense the cause of all the good in us by the example she has given us.

3. Beneath the Cross of her Son Mary acquired a power of intercession which is used on our behalf in every grace that we receive, and in virtue of this power she possesses an immediate influence on our supernatural life.

II. In considering these new titles of Mary to be called the first-born of all created beings, let us rejoice at the closeness of the tie which unites us to her, and let us with special confidence have recourse to her who is for us, after her Divine Son, the cause of all grace. The more she obtains, the more perfectly she accomplishes her mission and manifests her power.

COLLOQUY.

With sentiments of the most profound adoration let us render homage to the holiness of God. Let us at the same time acknowledge the goodness which He has shown us in giving to us Mary, and let us ask Jesus through Mary to give us the grace of being always closely united to God.

Ave Maris Stella.

FOURTH SATURDAY: THE PREDESTINATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We have now to follow the ineffable grace of the Divine Maternity in its magnificent consequences. For the Mother of God there is no more important result than her predestination to glory. We shall take for the two points of our meditation—(1) the *sublimity of her predestination;* (2) the *certainty of her predestination.*

MEDITATION.

"Sedere autem ad dexteram meam vel sinistram, non est meum dare vobis, sed quibus paratum est a Patre meo"—To sit on My right or left hand is not

Mine to give you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father (St. Matt. xx. 23).

First Prelude.—Let us think of Mary at the summit of celestial glory, allowing our imagination to dwell on the splendours of heaven.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the precious grace to strengthen our good resolutions, and multiply those good works which render our salvation more certain and increase our eternal happiness.

I. The Sublimity of the Predestination of Mary.

I. 1. The order, the harmony, and the beauty of the universe as a whole admit of individual cases of hardship and misfortune, which result from the laws enacted for the common good of mankind, and which in the case of irrational beings give no right to compensation. But God owes it to Himself to follow His reasonable creatures with a special attention, which shall provide each one with the means of reaching the end to which he is destined. How highly is man honoured by having the special Providence of God interested in his welfare!

The Providence of God reaches its climax when, not content with giving to man the means of salvation, it leads him through all the vicissitudes of his earthly life to the glorious goal of his supernatural destiny. It is then called *predestination*, the greatest of all graces, because it assures man of a happiness which causes all other good and evil fortune to be forgotten.

2. Now, Mary was not only predestined to glory, but God reserved for her a throne so exalted that she was to reign over the whole created world. How can we understand or worthily extol that sublime predestination which justifies Mary in exclaiming: "From all eternity no creature has been so loved by God as I am. During all eternity no other being shall be so happy as I"?

II. 1. Let us dwell awhile on this high privilege of Mary, and then think of the words of Christ: "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (St. John xiv. 2). Predestination leads to a fulness of happiness which varies according to the merit acquired through the grace of God. It is correct to say, God offers us Heaven to win; and it is equally true to add, God offers us in Heaven the choice of many places, one more magnificent than another.

If we reflect for a moment, do we not feel irresistibly impelled to aim at the highest of the thrones that are offered us? And yet we practically give up this ambition each time that we deliberately commit sin or choose the less good of two courses, while the better remains open to us. Our faults must be ascribed to our natural weakness. But how can we explain the indifference of a large number of Christians, who are mad after pleasures and riches and honours? While they are always anxious to take a high place in this world, they care nothing about the place they are to occupy in Heaven. It may be said that this carelessness is due to the fact that the glories of the future are unknown to us, and pass our comprehension; but would it not be more true to say

that people prefer to put away all thought of death rather than look forward to what will come after it ? Men know that this life must soon come to an end, but they think of the eternal future rather as a life without trouble than as a life full of happiness. This is a common mistake, and is mischievous in its consequences, for it deprives us of so much future happiness, and makes it so much easier for us to relapse into sin.

2. Let us, then, apply our minds to realize the happiness of Heaven, and ask God to give us that longing for the joys of eternity that filled the hearts of the Saints. St. Teresa said she was ready to walk on burning coals until the day of judgment, if she could thereby gain one degree higher of eternal glory.

II. The Certainty of the Predestination of Mary.

I. 1. Predestination is the unalterable decree by which God decides to put His elect in possession of the happiness of Heaven. The decree is eternal, like all that is in God, and is the expression of a holy and beneficent will, which is guided by an unerring view of the past and the future. The Lord knows His elect, but we, not knowing our destiny, are uncertain of salvation. This state of uncertainty is painful, and the soul in doubt yearns for an assurance of the future. What a blessed moment it is when God bestows upon some chosen soul the rare and precious favour of showing him his name written in the book of life !

2. Mary in the Divine Maternity possessed an

infallible pledge of salvation. If this dignity in itself does not sanctify her, at least it demands perfect holiness in her. The Mother of God, the Bride, the Spouse of the Lord, can neither sin nor be lost. Nay, more, the place of the Mother of God is the highest in Heaven. Mary knows that she is predestined to be the Queen of all Angels and all Saints. Who can describe the joy that fills her heart ?

II. It would be presumptuous for us to expect or to ask for a miraculous assurance of our salvation, but we can multiply the indirect pledges which the Divine goodness permits us to possess.

1. A general disposition of docility to the Divine law, united with prayer, will gain for us the grace of final perseverance, and death in a state of grace, if not absolutely without stain, at least free from all serious fault.

2. We are quite sure that a child of Mary will never be lost. We know that it is sweet to die after having had a constant devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Sovereign Judge.

3. It is equally impossible that God should permit that man to perish who is humble of heart, and can apply to himself the beatitude, " Blessed are the meek " (St. Matt. v. 4).

4. The Catholic faith alone can increase our hope, and while we worthily receive the Sacred Host we have the right to sing with the Church, *" O sacrum convivium, in quo . . . futuræ gloriæ nobis pignus datur "*—O Sacred Banquet, in which . . . a pledge of future glory is given to us !

5. If we wear the religious habit, do we not

continually hear the magnificent assurances of Christ promising eternal life to those who for His sake have renounced their natural affections and their worldly possessions ?

Let us thank God for His generous liberality in surrounding us with such precious pledges. He places such ample means at our disposal that theologians do not hesitate to say, "If you are not yet predestined, hasten to become so." Let us devote all our energy to using these means aright.

COLLOQUY.

While we marvel at the singular love which God bears to His Mother, let us renew our congratulations to Mary the more fervently because the same decree which overwhelms her with favours gives her to us as Mediatress of grace through the power of her intercession.

The good offices of the Mother of God will increase the fervour of our prayers, in which we shall make known to her our anxiety about our own salvation, and that of those who are dear to us. We shall humbly pray to her never to let them be lost.

Ave Maris Stella.

FIFTH SATURDAY: THE SANCTIFYING GRACE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall in this meditation devote our attention to the first sanctifying grace, that rich store of spiritual treasure of which we have to make full use in

order that we may attain to life eternal. Our three points will be : (1) A *general consideration* of the gift ; (2) the *first grace of Mary ;* (3) *our own first grace.*

MEDITATION.

' Diligit Dominus portas Sion, super omnia tabernacula Jacob "—The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob (Ps. lxxxvi. 2).

First Prelude.—The scene is still in the humble dwelling of Mary at Nazareth, where the Angel Gabriel salutes in her a being full of grace.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may appreciate worthily our election to grace in order that we may not waste so precious a treasure.

I. First Grace in General.

I. *Nature and degree* of the first grace.

1. To the gift of natural life God has condescended to add, in the case of His reasonable creatures, the gift of a supernatural and Divine life, which He confers upon them by giving them sanctifying grace.

Let us endeavour to realize a little more fully the meaning of this inestimable favour.

Sanctifying grace is a real necessity of our being, though we have not merited it for ourselves—an habitual quality which raises us above all created beings, and gives us a likeness to God. It renders us just, and holy, and acceptable to God, so that by means of this gift we cease to be His mere

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

servants, and become His adopted children, the objects of His paternal affection. Just as our nature requires the exercise of our faculties in a manner suitable to our natural vocation, so sanctifying grace gives us higher faculties, infused virtues, and an energy directed towards our supernatural end. Consequently, many sublime gifts come down into our souls at the same time as sanctifying grace. Nay, more, while awaiting the time when we shall enter into possession of our inheritance, our Heavenly Father enters into our souls, drawn to us by sanctifying grace. God dwells in the just man ; the body of the just man is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Sanctifying grace means that God wishes to make us like Him, to make us partakers of His own happiness ; that He formally invites us to share it, and creates in us that quality which makes His love possible.

And this favour is *absolutely gratuitous*. We are as entirely powerless to merit this gift or to dispose ourselves to receive it as nothingness is incapable of preparing itself to receive existence.

2. God bestows this grace on our souls in different degrees according to an infinitely wise plan, the economy of which has not been revealed to us. We know, nevertheless, that He considers the dispositions of men ; and when in Holy Baptism grace is communicated to the soul of a child, the close solidarity which God has established among men, even in matters of the supernatural life, gives us grounds for believing that the dispositions of the parents, the virtue of the minister conferring the Sacrament, and the prayers offered to God for that

purpose, have an influence on the abundance of the grace bestowed.

II. What sentiments are aroused in our minds by a clear understanding of this doctrine? What practical conclusions are we to draw therefrom?

Many salutary sentiments and resolutions suggest themselves: (1) The magnitude of the gift calls forth our admiration and gratitude. "What is a man that Thou shouldst magnify him?" (Job vii. 17). (2) The value of grace, its incompatibility with sin, ought to excite in us an intense hatred of every grave fault. (3) The gratuitous nature of the gift recalls to our minds the words of St. Paul: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). Truth drives out vanity. (4) The sovereign dispensation of graces demands from us a respectful and childlike submission to the Divine plan. (5) We should thank God for the virtues of our parents, for we have profited by their prayers and their merits, and parents should pray that the children who may be born to them may be endowed with the choicest graces.

Too many parents, even Christians, neglect this duty of intercession for the children that are to be born. They are full of care for the health and safety of their bodies, but have little thought for the supernatural life of their souls.

The value which they attach to this grace should make parents careful to have their children baptized with the least possible delay.

II. The First Grace of the Mother of God.

I. To understand the characteristics of the initial grace of Mary, let us compare it to the grace of Jesus Christ, and to that of the rest of mankind.

1. *The grace of Jesus Christ.*—(1) The human nature of Christ, physically united to His Divinity, received from this union with the person of the Word a substantial holiness—that is to say, a holiness inseparable from that Person, and giving to all His actions an infinite merit. The works of Jesus Christ, even if we could conceive Him without sanctifying grace, would have been worthy of eternal life. He alone would have been able to merit sanctifying grace if He had received it after the beginning of His human existence.

(2) This same union with the Word necessarily excluded all possibility of sin, even all possible participation in original sin.

(3) The grace of Jesus Christ was incapable of increase, for He had from the first all the sanctifying grace which God deemed proper for His only-begotten Son. Moreover, this grace was consummated in Him from the first moment by the beatific vision which He never ceased to enjoy. In other words, the grace of Jesus Christ was the grace, not of a traveller upon the earth, but of a blessed inhabitant of Paradise.

2. *The grace of the rest of mankind.*—(1) From the time of the original sin of Adam men no longer receive grace at the first moment of their existence. The gift is delayed until the time when the wild-olive, the type of every new-born child, is grafted

into the good olive-tree, Jesus Christ (Rom. xi. 24). Before the birth of Our Lord this was effected by the faith of the parents in the Redeemer who was to come, but in our own time it is ordinarily effected by the Sacrament of Baptism. Sanctifying grace may be acquired without Baptism by an act of perfect charity, implying the desire for Baptism; but such an act does not confer the sacramental character, or render a person capable of receiving the other sacraments.

(2) This grace promises glory, but does not actually give it, and every man can grow in grace during the whole term of his life.

3. *The grace of the Mother of God.*—By her initial grace the Mother of God is placed between other human beings and Jesus Christ.

(1) The grace of the Divine Maternity is not sanctifying by itself. Mary is not, like her Divine Son, substantially holy. Taken by themselves, her person and her nature have no claim to receive sanctifying grace; but consider Mary as she is, with her vocation to the Divine Maternity, and she immediately appears to you as the woman clothed with the sun, Jesus Christ; as the daughter and the Spouse of God, whom her Heavenly Bridegroom cannot but love. Called upon to enter into physical contact with the source of all grace, she is bound to receive grace in abundance. Before giving corporal life to God, the supernatural life must render her worthy of fulfilling this office, and a special grace is given to prepare her to contract a perpetual affinity with God. For how many reasons was grace morally due to the Mother of God! In us, nothing called for grace;

in Mary it was demanded by the greatest of all favours, gratuitously given—the dignity of her Divine Maternity.

(2) On the other hand, the sanctifying grace of Mary is, like ours, the effect, anticipated in her case, of the Redemption, as was also the grace of her Maternity. It was capable in Mary, as in ourselves, of continual increase, and it was not accompanied in her case any more than in ours by the Beatific Vision. In all these respects Mary resembles us, but she surpasses the rest of mankind by the perpetual continuance of her grace; for she was in a state of grace from the very first moment of her existence, and so remained for ever. She surpasses us and the Angels in the positive perfection of this supernatural life, which she received from the first in an eminent degree, sufficient by continual augmentation to raise her above all the elect of God. Mary was to be the Queen of all the elect, and according to the opinion of distinguished theologians—for instance, Suarez—the first grace of Mary surpassed all the grace ever acquired by the most highly-favoured of mankind.

This is no mere arbitrary opinion. God, in the generous dispensation of His gifts, generally goes beyond what is absolutely necessary. A grace which raised Mary, little by little, above the Heavens was all that was necessary; the grace which transported her at once to the highest place was a gift in accordance with God's customary munificence. Does it not, then, seem more reasonable that Mary, predestined to be the Mother of God, never passed through any degrees of in-

feriority? And did it not need an absolutely exceptional privilege to prepare a fitting habitation for the Son of God?

II. Let us ponder over these truths in order to increase our reverent devotion towards Mary, the highest of all created beings.

III. Our Election to Grace.

I. Grace, although of infinite value in all its degrees, grows according to its duration and abundance.

1. God gives us grace as soon as we are capable of receiving it. It is given to us as little children. It is with every infant in his cradle, and awaits only the awakening of the heir of the kingdom, chosen by the best of fathers, to be manifest and active.

2. Since, then, we have received it abundantly, are we not under the new law? Do we not belong to Christian families which from time immemorial have cherished the Catholic faith as their most precious possession?

3. In us Christians, who have the full rights of sons, and are not the slaves of empty observances, grace possesses a mysterious excellence, which induced Christ to say of St. John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets of the old law: "But he that is the lesser in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (St. Luke vii. 28).

II. Let us show our gratitude to God for His gift. Let us set a high value on grace, and do all in our power to make it grow in us.

COLLOQUY.

Let us salute Mary full of grace, and pray that our life henceforth may be devoted to the increase of grace in ourselves.

Ave Maria.

SIXTH SATURDAY: THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We have just considered the initial grace of the Mother of God. At what moment was it granted to her? The answer to this question leads us to the consideration of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. Several meditations, it is true, have had this high privilege as their theme, but in accordance with the plan we have laid down we must here look at the subject in its theological aspect. Let us not forget that all our meditations are intended to increase our devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In the three points of this we shall consider—(1) the *privilege of the Immaculate Conception* in itself; (2) *its purpose in the Divine plan;* (3) the *glorious consequences* of this prerogative and its proclamation.

MEDITATION.

"Una est columba mea"—One is my Dove (Cant. vi. 8).

First Prelude.—Let us represent to ourselves the Immaculate Virgin, clothed in her mantle of blue,

her eyes raised to Heaven. To her Son on high she addresses a confident prayer.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for the intelligence of faith. O my God, grant that I may understand something of the wisdom and the beauty of Thy works. *"Da mihi intellectum"*—*Give me understanding* (Ps. cxviii. 34).

I. The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

In order fully to appreciate this magnificent privilege of the Blessed Virgin, we cannot do better than take one by one the elements of which the dogmatic definition is composed.

I. *The preservation from the taint of original sin.*

1. We must remember that by a mysterious law of heredity the sin of Adam was transmitted to all his descendants. By this sin he lost his supernatural gift of original justice and sanctity, a gift freely bestowed upon him for himself and all his posterity. At the moment when a spiritual soul created by God is united to a material body in order to begin its human existence, that soul must be clothed in the beauty of sanctifying grace, and so be in a condition to accomplish its destiny or be displeasing to God, and appear to Him stained and impure. But because we have sinned in Adam in the sense that his sin is imputed to us, this grace is refused to our souls, and we become objects of aversion to God.

Mary was born of Adam, like the other children of men, and yet she never contracted the stain of sin. Being preserved from the original taint, she received into her soul, from the first instant of its

creation, the glorious light of an extraordinary sanctifying grace, and, instead of being an object of aversion to God, she was regarded by Him with a special love.

2. This first glimpse of the dignity of Mary must necessarily excite our wonder and admiration, but we must also try to understand the hatred with which impious men regard the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The original sanctity of Mary implies our own stain, and to proclaim her immaculate is to confess ourselves sinners; and this is repugnant to human pride, while the difficulty of understanding how the sin of Adam is transmitted to us furnishes an excuse for rebelling against the faith. Let us humbly confess the sin of our origin, and submit our poor intelligence to the infinite wisdom of God.

II. *Preservation by a special grace and privilege.*

We have already seen what an extraordinary privilege was bestowed on Mary. Among the countless millions of Adam's descendants, we cannot name one who was exempt from original sin except the Mother of God. What, then, is Mary, that she should be thus blessed among all women?

III. *In view of the merits of the Saviour of the human race, Jesus Christ.*

1. Let us not forget this third element, which defends the true religion from the charge made by some heretics that the Church exalts the Blessed Virgin above Jesus Christ. In the teaching of the Church the Immaculate Conception is a gift, not only of God the Creator, but also of God the Redeemer. The great Doctors of the twelfth and

thirteenth centuries found difficulty in reconciling the original purity of Mary with the universal necessity of the Redemption. This latter dogma was so firmly established that the former would never have been known if theology had not shown, by one of its most illustrious representatives, the Franciscan Duns Scotus, that the privilege of Mary, far from excepting her from the redeeming work of her Son, was the most excellent fruit of the Redemption. Mary is the most glorious work of Jesus Christ.

Such is the great tradition of the Church. All is subject to Christ, all is His, all is for His glory, till the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God His Father. When we say, in the words of the Apostle, that "in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven" (Phil. ii. 10), we do not except His Mother.

2. Let us take care so to regulate our devotion to Mary that it may always result in an increase of the honours and glory of Christ. Let us pray to our Blessed Mother to lead us in the only true way, which is Jesus.

II. The Purpose of the Immaculate Conception in the Divine Plan.

I. 1. If we only consider the Divine Maternity, it is easy to understand that it would be inconsistent with the fitness of things to allow any stain to remain in her whom God has clothed with such incomparable dignity.

2. But there are more imperative reasons still in the traditional notion, which shows us in the

Mother of God a new Eve, victorious over the Devil and his seed, a chosen daughter, and even the Spouse of God. Sin, even original sin, seems to us as irreconcilable with Mary as defeat is irreconcilable with victory, the fatherly love of God with His avenging wrath, or the choice of a bride with hatred and aversion. For ages past, when the Church has applied to Mary the eloquent description of Eternal Wisdom, abiding always with God, cherished by Him, and accompanying Him in all His works, she has sung a hymn in honour of the Immaculate Virgin.

If the Immaculate Conception of Mary remains a grace, a gratuitous gift, this does not mean that there was no special reason for God's goodness. Mary in her vocation to the Divine Maternity and in the circumstances of that vocation had a title and a sort of right to this privilege. She is not immaculate simply as another creature might be whom God might preserve from original sin ; she is immaculate because, if her descent from Adam rendered her liable to the stain, her personal mission demanded her freedom from it. The privilege of Mary was a singular privilege in fact, and was, moreover, incommunicable to any other.

II. Having paid our tribute of reverent devotion to our Mother, let us turn our attention to the special reasons which should establish a stronger opposition between many men and sin—the opposition of the *Christian.* He is signed with the seal of the Holy Trinity, the adopted son of God, called upon to triumph over a corrupt world ; he is bound to spread Christianity by an edifying life. There is a greater opposition in the religious, who

accepts from the Church the mission of representing the perfect Gospel of Christ, in order to help his fellow-men in the performance of their duties, in doing honour to Christian society, and in undertaking every heroic work. There is a still greater and more radical opposition in the priest, the mediator between Heaven and earth, who bears in his soul the stamp of Christ's priesthood, and is charged with the duty of regenerating other men in the likeness of Christ by spreading the Word of God and administering the Sacraments.

This is a glorious mission, but, alas! often forgotten, to the great injury of souls. How many sins, how many failures are there among those to whom the Apostle said: "*Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos*"—The temple of God is holy, which you are (1 Cor. iii. 17). If Christians were faithful to their duties, our religion would have an irresistible force of expansion; the whole world would be Christian. But, alas! through our weaknesses and shortcomings the barque of Peter seems always as if it were about to founder. Let us weep over the evil that is in the world!

III. The Glorious Consequences of the Immaculate Conception and its Proclamation.

I. The Immaculate Conception is glorious, first, in its *direct* consequences—namely, the other prerogatives which are attached to it. It is glorious also *indirectly* because it enables us to understand better the dignity and the beauty of Mary.

1. *The glory of the direct consequences.*—The result of the Immaculate Conception in Mary

is a perfect consistency of interior life, freedom from concupiscence, an easy perception of all truth, and a natural tendency to all virtue, and an immunity from that kind of death which is our common lot.

2. *Indirect glory.*—Faith in this high prerogative throws new light on Mary's whole life. Her fulness of grace appears to us more absolute ; she is more perfectly blessed among women. The Lord is with her from the first, her character as the new Eve is unfolded before our eyes, the plan of redemption is more fully understood, and without restriction or limitation we acclaim Mary in Heaven as Queen of all Saints. Here, as ever, faith enlightens our understanding, and gives us a clearness of vision which confirms the truth.

II. *The proclamation of the dogma* in our own time exalts—(1) *purity* in an age which glorifies passion ; (2) *humility* in an age in which men's pride is their ruin ; (3) *the supernatural life* in an age which denies everything supernatural.

COLLOQUY.

Let us offer our homage to the Blessed Virgin, and thank God for having in our time made known her glorious privilege to all the world, and let us offer to Him our resolutions to live pure and humble lives.

Ave Maria.

SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE DIVINE MATERNITY AND SANCTIFYING GRACE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—It is useful and instructive to compare the supreme dignity, the incomparable prerogative of the highest of all created beings, with a grace which is essentially common to all the inhabitants of Heaven and all good Christians on earth. We shall consider—(1) *the Divine Maternity without grace;* (2) *the graces demanded by the Maternity;* and (3) *the Maternity prepared by grace.*

MEDITATION.

"Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum, caritatem autem non habeam, factus sum velut æs sonans, aut cymbalum tinniens"—If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal (1 Cor. xiii. 1).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves at Nazareth, in the dwelling of the Blessed Virgin, at the moment when the Angel salutes her as full of grace.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may always value the grace of God as we ought.

I. THE DIVINE MATERNITY WITHOUT SANCTIFYING GRACE.

I. When for the purpose of comparison we separate two things so inseparable as the Divine Maternity and sanctifying grace, we must give the first place to the Divine Maternity. To be really

the Mother of God is a higher privilege than to be the child of God by an adoption effected by sanctifying grace. To give to God a true human nature was a greater thing for Mary than simply to receive from Him the elevation of her own nature. To command God, to receive His obedience, was more than to pay Him the respect of a daughter. To belong to the hypostatic order by a real and mutual consanguinity with the Creator is a nobler prerogative than to occupy the place of honour in the less exalted order of habitual grace. The worship given to the Saints is *dulia*, while that rendered to the Mother of God is of a higher kind, and is distinguished as *hyperdulia*.

Yet the Divine Maternity did not sanctify by itself ; it did not enable Mary directly to merit the glory of Heaven. She owes her exalted position, the degree of her eternal happiness, to a holiness which depends formally on sanctifying grace. And from this point of view we may apply to the Divine Maternity the expressive language which St. Paul uses of the highest gifts : If I were the Mother of God, and (though the supposition is an impossible one) if I had not charity, I should be nothing. I should gain nothing by my incomparable dignity. St. Augustine says similarly : "*Materna propinquitas nihil Mariæ profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde quam carne gestasset*"— The maternal relationship would have profited Mary nothing if she had not borne Christ more happily in her heart than in her womb.

II. The proposition suggested by the words of St. Paul may be startling, but it is strictly true ; and, according to the holy Fathers, it never was

an object of doubt to Mary. She did not consent to be the Mother of God until she had satisfied herself that the dignity was consistent with duty.

How highly we should value sanctifying grace! What importance we should attach to the blessing of being at peace with God! The signs or the effects of the value we set upon it are the following:

1. It enables us cheerfully to recognize in others talents and successes more brilliant than our own. We willingly accept our inferiority if we possess the grace of God, and what is all else in comparison with this?

2. It helps us to understand better the conduct of the Saints, the precautions they took, the sacrifices they imposed upon themselves, in order to keep themselves more securely in the friendship of God. Even the hope of some benefit to be gained, though it may strengthen our confidence in the Divine help, must never make us rashly run into danger.

3. It enlightens us on the principles which ought to direct our decisions and our counsels. In the choice of a state of life it is not enough to inquire what career promises the greatest worldly prosperity, but the most important consideration of all is what course will best ensure our personal holiness. The light of faith teaches us that Providence directs all things for the best; and in the end we shall find that, if we have been guided principally by the desire of holiness, we shall have done what is best to secure our real happiness.

4. It produces in us a profound aversion, an absolute horror of all sin.

II. The Grace demanded by the Divine Maternity.

I. Happily no opposition between the Divine Maternity and sanctifying grace is possible. The Maternity demands sanctifying grace in the highest degree, and thus it takes the first place, as necessarily containing grace within itself. Let us endeavour to realize this as fully as St. Augustine did when he wrote: "When sin is spoken of, I will never admit that there can be any question of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that for the honour of Our Lord" ("De Natura et Gratia," chap. xxxvi.).

1. The Maternity demands sanctifying grace. No one can have any doubt of that. As Mother, the Blessed Virgin is to receive the respect and affection of her Son. God cannot love a creature in whom He does not see grace. Is it possible, then, that this same Son, as God, should have to repulse her whom, as man, He embraces with the tenderest love? Such a contradiction would be repugnant to the wonderful union of the two natures in the Son of God. Again, as Mother, Mary was all love for her Son. That love removed her far from everything that, like sin, could deprive her of the love of God. As Mother of Our Lord, she bore within her Him who was the fountain of all grace. Was it possible that she could be like barren soil, not watered by its salutary streams?

2. The Divine Maternity demands the highest degree of grace. As Mother of God, Mary must

be honoured above all created beings, and such honour presupposes the most eminent holiness.

III. The Divine Maternity prepared by Grace.

I. In another respect, the grace which adorned the soul of Mary prepared her to be the Mother of God. It disposed her, in the fullest sense of the word, to rise to the highest dignity, and to render to mankind the greatest service that it ever received ; for no act was more truly effective towards the salvation of mankind than Mary's consent to become the Mother of God. Grace and zeal for souls were united in this act with marvellous results.

II. It is true that God does not always miraculously give talents and natural qualifications even to produce results which seem to tend to His glory. Great Saints may be imprudent prelates, indiscreet directors, or indifferent preachers ; but the most happy results are assured by talents placed at the service of holiness. And talents without virtue are often fruitless, even if they do not work great harm. Each of us, then, ought to say to himself : " If I hope to do good, I must sanctify myself." It is a grave error, and sometimes a fatal one, to regard sanctity as unnecessary or unimportant.

COLLOQUY.

While we admire the manner in which Mary preferred the friendship of God before everything,

let us ask her to teach us to say with St. Ignatius: "Lord, take everything, but leave me Thy love and Thy grace." Let us regard nothing else as worthy of consideration in comparison with this great blessing.

Ave Maria.

EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE INFUSED VIRTUES AND GIFTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall now continue our reflections on the great favours attached to the Divine Maternity, and consider—(1) the *general purpose* of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; (2) the *generosity* with which they were bestowed upon Mary; and (3) *their infusion into ourselves.*

MEDITATION.

"*Induit me vestimentis salutis, et indumento justitiæ circumdedit me quasi sponsam ornatam monilibus suis*"—*He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robe of justice He hath covered me as a bride adorned with her jewels* (Isa. lxi. 10).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves in the humble dwelling at Nazareth at the moment when the Angel proclaimed Mary full of grace.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may understand better the lavish bounty of our Creator and Father, in order that we may serve Him more generously with the affection of children.

I. The Infused Virtues and Gifts in the Divine Plan.

I. It was not enough for the God of all goodness to call us to a happiness which we had done nothing to merit. Wishing to give us the privilege of co-operating with His grace, He has endowed us with the necessary means to do so, supplying all our deficiencies from the treasures of His power, His wisdom, and His infinite bounty. He first strengthens our nature by sanctifying grace, then he adds to the faculties of our nature new powers of a superior order, so that in our acts themselves, and in the dignity of the principle from which they emanate, may be seen the sublime end to which they lead. These are the *infused virtues*, so called to distinguish them from acquired virtues, which result naturally from the frequent repetition of good acts. We acquire these infused virtues when the water of holy Baptism is poured upon us, or when we receive habitual grace and charity.

Clothed with dignity and holiness, the Christian is for the Holy Ghost a temple, bought with the price of the blood of Christ. Could this Divine Guest, coming down into our souls, fail to bring His jewels with Him? These are His gifts, fresh ornaments for our souls, destined to prepare us for heroic deeds, to make the Holy Ghost, who is the hidden principle of our works, shine in them, to communicate to us a holy eagerness to follow whithersoever He may lead us. By the gift of *fear of the Lord*, He makes us fear above everything to displease God; the gift of *piety* unites us to

God with the affection of children for their father ; the gift of *knowledge* makes us know God better ; the gift of *fortitude* inspires us with courage to overcome the greatest obstacles ; *understanding* enables us to comprehend and penetrate the truths of faith ; the gift of *counsel* guides us safely in all our undertakings ; and, finally, *wisdom* helps us to taste and appreciate the savour of Divine things.

Enriched with these treasures, we see them given more abundantly according as we correspond to the favours of God. Though our own acts may strengthen and develop habits of virtue, they cannot increase the intensity of the gratuitous gifts ; but our Heavenly Father conforms His supernatural Providence to the exigencies of our nature, and wherever we do good actions He strengthens and develops the virtues with which He has endowed us.

II. 1. Does not the contemplation of God's goodness prompt us to exclaim in the words of the Psalmist : " What is man, That thou art mindful of him ?" (Ps. viii. 5). Does it not help us to realize the truth of these words from the " Imitation of Christ " (book iv., chap. xiii.) : " No creature under Heaven is so beloved as the devout soul to whom God cometh "?

2. Let us recognize the holiness with which we are anointed. It will develop in us a sentiment of profound and adequate reverence towards the poorest of real Christians.

3. Are we not bound to fix our hopes on things above, to cherish noble desires, use noble language, and do noble deeds ?

II. The Virtues and Gifts in Mary.

I. 1. The infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are the principal constituent parts of holiness. They were from the first communicated in an eminent degree to the Mother of God, the chosen Bride of the Lord.

2. Though placed from her entrance into the world upon the loftiest heights, Mary was, nevertheless, able to make progress in holiness in accordance with the graces bestowed on her. She enjoyed the fullest benefit of these graces by her perfect fidelity. Who can follow her in her rapid ascent? What eye can contemplate her as she rises to heights beyond our gaze?

II. Let us offer her the just tribute of our admiration: but in order to please her, let us renew our resolutions to make progress in virtue. We have an unlimited field before us; let us not be afraid to quicken our steps. Why should our virtue be like a little spark smouldering in the ashes, when it might have the heat and activity of an irresistible flame? Why are we so slothful while energy is a condition of safety? Oh, let us shake off this listless inaction, which robs life of all its brightness and joy, and endangers our eternal happiness!

III. The Virtues and Gifts in Ourselves.

I. We marvel as we contemplate these rich gifts in Mary, Mother of God. How much more wonderful it is to contemplate them in ourselves!

Yet it is true that all these Divine gifts exist in me—in a lesser degree, no doubt, but substantially the same as in the Mother of God.

1. *They are in me!* Can I truly say this? Yes, if I have not lost them by sin. Oh, what misery our want of fidelity to grace brings down on us! Let us cease to measure our faults only by the possible pains of hell. Let us measure them by the gifts of God which we have despised, and by the work of God in us which they have destroyed.

2. *They are in me!* But how? Are they like a treasure buried and forgotten, like capital uninvested? Is this the way to treat them?

II. Let us not despair, but resolve courageously to make the best of the talents given to us. In trouble and adversity, let the remembrance of these gifts console us, and in prosperity let the same thought chasten our joy. Perhaps the rival over whom we triumph may be more truly rich than we ourselves. In all circumstances let us find in this recollection wherewith to raise our courage and our aspirations in order to help us in the way of good works.

COLLOQUY.

Let us imagine we hear Our Lord saying to us, as He said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God" (St. John iv. 10). Let us confess our ignorance, and ask our Lord through His holy Mother to chase away the darkness of our souls, and quicken our sluggish hearts, that we may offer Him a holy resolution to make

the virtues and gifts of God grow in us and bring forth abundant fruit.

Ave Maria.

NINTH SATURDAY: THE PRETERNATURAL GIFTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—To the supernatural beauty of the grace which adorned the souls of our first parents God added other gifts of a lower order, but still beyond nature, and therefore called *preternatural*. Such gifts are exemption from death, immunity from suffering, and that perfect control over the lower passions and appetites which is called integrity or freedom from concupiscence. Besides these three gifts, our first parents received an admirable infused knowledge, implying an extraordinary acquaintance with all the works of creation. The share of these gifts which was vouchsafed to Mary will suggest to us useful considerations: (1) Mary and *suffering;* (2) Mary and *mortality;* (3) Mary and the gifts of *integrity* and *knowledge.*

MEDITATION.

"Deaurabis eam auro mundissimo intus et foris" —*Thou shalt overlay it with the purest gold within and without* (Exod. xxv. 11).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the house of the Blessed Virgin, and the Angel Gabriel saluting her as full of grace.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may know our dear Mother better, and value virtue more than mere pleasure.

I. The Blessed Virgin and Suffering.

I. If the preternatural gifts of our first parents were a necessary consequence of the state of innocence, and if sin alone could justify the deprivation of them, then Mary, who by a singular grace and privilege was preserved from all stain of original sin, should have recommenced here the happy life of Paradise. But no law of necessity required that the most innocent of all created beings should be set free from the miseries of our present condition. Let us leave the decision to God in the free counsels of His wisdom. What did he do? Among the prerogatives of Adam, some, without adding to his moral perfection, increased his happiness, others enhanced his moral worth and increased his capacity for good. No gifts of pure enjoyment were given on earth to the humanity of Christ nor to the Blessed Virgin, but those gifts which were, so to speak, a complement of perfection were assured to them, together with original grace. Christ knew suffering, for He was the King of Martyrs; Mary knew suffering, and we invoke her as the Queen of Martyrs.

II. How widely the counsels of Divine wisdom differ from the judgments of men! Men would, above all things, desire that exemption from suffering, that present happiness which was denied to the Blessed Virgin, while they would value but lightly those gifts which were the special attribute of Mary, and which were bound to be so, because they are the perfection of justice, and the almost indispensable means of leading an absolutely pure life.

Which is right? Is not the search after truth and justice far more important than the pursuit of pleasure? The transient delights of this world leave no permanent satisfaction, but fruits of eternal happiness may ripen in sorrow.

Let us strive to reach that degree of self-renunciation, the attainment of which is a source of eternal joy to the Saints. Let us endeavour to live without looking for pleasures in the present life, setting all our affections on the happiness of the world to come.

II. Mary and Death.

"The wages of sin is death," says St. Paul (Rom. vi. 23). Then Mary ought not to have died—and, in fact, many persons have believed, and still believe, that the harmonious union of body and soul in Mary was never dissolved by death; but most theologians presume that as Christ died, His Mother died also, and this belief is general among Christians.

But Mary's death was not like ours. It was possible for her to die, because a being composed of body and soul has in itself no principle of immortality. She died, indeed, because in this humiliation the Mother could not be separated from her Son. Our death is a penalty, an expiation, but the death of Mary had no penal character in it. We die because we are by nature subject to death, but Mary had done nothing to render herself liable to it; yet, as Jesus died, it was becoming that Mary also should die, to complete the resemblance between the Son and the Mother.

Death presents itself to us as something to be dreaded, and is often preceded by painful diseases. To Mary it came without sickness or pain, but sweet and peaceful, and gladly welcomed, because it reunited her to Jesus.

II. Let us accept with resignation the death which Mary did not refuse, for such acceptance is meritorious ; and let us endeavour to follow her example, and love pain, sorrow, and humiliation, that we may in some measure resemble our dear Saviour. Our love of Christ is great when it attracts us to things that are painful and distasteful. That attraction is one of the greatest triumphs of that love. Do we think of that in suffering and adversity ?

III. Mary and the Gifts of Integrity and Knowledge.

I. 1. No interior temptation, no rebellious passions, ever had the power to hinder Mary in her progress towards perfection. She knew not the sting of concupiscence, nor even the half-conscious leaning of the will towards evil.

2. What was Mary's knowledge ? It is not easy to say precisely. There is nothing to show that she had any infused knowledge of human and profane truths, and her knowledge of Divine things was certainly progressive, because, according to the testimony of the Evangelist, there were mysteries in the life of Jesus which she kept in her heart, not yet understanding them (St. Luke ii. 50). On the other hand, it seems that the path of justice before Mary must have been full of light.

She was the seat of the Eternal Wisdom, and no dark clouds could obscure her way ; and surely the reasons for the highest duties and the best way of fulfilling them must have been revealed to her in the clearest light. To the fulness of her practical knowledge of justice let us add a clear view of the supernatural world and of all that the Mother of God should know, and we can go no further.

II. 1. Let us submit humbly to the necessity for struggle and effort, from which Mary was preserved. By prayer and personal exertion let us strive to make ourselves more and more like her, and with this end in view let us learn how to overcome our passions. The passions in themselves are forces which may help us, but which only hinder and embarrass us if they are under no restraint, and if in their violence they are allowed to go beyond proper limits. True wisdom consists in resisting their impulses when they would lead us to overstep the bounds of reason, and to do this we must bring them under restraint. But how is this to be done ? By struggling against them. This is one of the uses of mortification. Oh, how much better is the man who has his passions under control than he who allows himself to become a slave to them !

2. The only really important knowledge is the practical knowledge of virtue. If we wish to make progress therein we must come to no decision without calm and careful deliberation, and listen patiently to the advice of impartial friends who tell us the truth, even if it is sometimes humiliating to our pride.

COLLOQUY.

This meditation contains lessons for our *life* and our *death.*

1. Let us bow down humbly before God, who imposes upon us the penalty and the trial of death, and after having invoked the Blessed Virgin, let us say in loving submission the prayer to which Pope Pius X. has attached a plenary indulgence:

"*Domine Deus meus, jam nunc quodcunque mortis genus prout tibi placuerit, cum omnibus suis angoribus, pœnis ac doloribus, de manu tua æquo ac libenti animo accipio*"—O Lord my God, henceforth I accept willingly and with resignation from Thy hand whatever kind of death Thou mayst send me, with all its anguish, its pains and sufferings.

2. Let us offer to Mary a life ordered by practical wisdom. Let us not ask for happiness, but virtue. Solomon asked the Lord to teach him how to govern his people, and thus pleased God. Let us pray that we may be able to govern our passions.

Ave Maria.

TENTH SATURDAY: THE GRACES GRATUITOUSLY GIVEN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall consider in this meditation—(1) *graces gratuitously given in general;* (2) the graces *gratuitously given to the Blessed Virgin;* (3) *those which may be given to us.*

MEDITATION.

"*Astitit regina ad dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate*"—*The Queen stood on Thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety* (Ps. xliv. 9).

First Prelude.—In the house of Nazareth the Angel salutes Mary as full of grace.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may follow the example of our Blessed Mother by receiving with humility the gifts divinely bestowed upon us, and employing them to the glory of God.

I. Gifts gratuitously given in General.

I. 1. All the gifts of God are the effect of His free bounty. Those of the supernatural order borrow from their very sublimity an additional character of gratuitousness, for they exceed all the needs of created nature.

But certain gifts of this order, such as sanctifying grace, infused virtues, and the assistance of actual grace, help towards our sanctification, and therefore are at the disposal of all, because "God will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4). If the first gifts are gratuitous, their increase may be merited. Other gifts, on the contrary, are intended, not so much for the spiritual advantage of the receiver, as for the general good of the Church. Not following and not conferring any direct merit, and reserved for individuals, they are in a new sense gratuitous, and are known in theology as graces gratuitously given. They are also called

by the Greek word *charismata*, used by St. Paul (1 Cor. xii. 4-12).

2. We may divide these gifts into two classes. To the first class belong the offices or dignities with which men are invested, the functions they have to exercise, with the powers required in their performance, the natural talents and supernatural helps bestowed upon the holders of such offices for the general well-being of society. As examples of such dignities, we may mention jurisdiction, infallibility, the priesthood. To the second class, strictly speaking, belong the favours which even the common necessity of the social body cannot lay claim to. Such depend on an extraordinary dispensation of Providence, which is guided by no other rule but the free-will of God. "The Spirit breatheth where He will" (St. John iii. 8).

There are gifts of *knowledge*, such as prophecy, the discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, the interpretation of speeches, a special aptitude for explaining the mysteries of the faith, and implanting men's minds with high principles and sentiments; and there are gifts of *action*, such as the working of miracles and the cure of diseases.

3. Such gifts confirm our faith and increase our devotion. What an immense impulse was given to religious fervour by the revelations made to Blessed Margaret Mary and the apparitions at Lourdes!

Without being meritorious in themselves, they constitute an adornment of the soul, and the good use that the receiver makes of them is worthy of praise and reward.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

The Saints, animated by the spirit of humility, fled from the honours of this world, and shrank from receiving graces gratuitously given.

II. Quite different is the spirit of the world. It excites in men an inordinate desire for distinction, and fills history with strife, contention, intrigue, and hatred. How much more edifying to the world is the Christian spirit, which discourages jealous competition, brings men nearer together, and gives the best place to the most deserving!

Let us be animated by this spirit. If the command of superiors or the force of circumstances should require our promotion for the common good, let no selfish or cowardly fear restrain us. But let us avoid all mean and dishonourable ambition, and be content with a subordinate position, which may be best for ourselves and for others. We do ourselves the greatest harm if we are always restlessly striving after power and distinction.

II. Graces gratuitously given to the Blessed Virgin.

1. In the designs of God the greatest of all pure creatures was never required to give up the lowliness and retirement which were most becoming to her sex and condition. In the course of her earthly life we never hear of her preaching in public, or exercising any sacred ministry, or working miracles, or doing any acts to make herself conspicuous in the world.

But on the one hand the Divine Maternity was

the most sublime of all dignities to which any human being could be called, and on the other hand Mary had in her vocation and the duties it entailed upon her a title to all spiritual adornments and privileges. For this reason theologians attribute to Mary all gifts gratuitously given, with the qualification that their exercise was to be limited to the sphere in which her life was passed.

And is not this opinion confirmed by the words of Holy Scripture? What prophetic inspiration, what wondrous illumination, filled the soul of Mary when, before any other human being, she learned the mystery of the Incarnation, and gave thanks for it in her *Magnificat!* What discerning of spirits in all the circumstances of her life! Did she want the power of working miracles, when the performance of the first miracle of Jesus was obtained by her request? Did not St. Luke obtain from her his knowledge of the birth and infancy of Jesus, and was it not from her that, after the death and ascension of Jesus, the Apostles and disciples sought light and edification? And now, from the highest place in Heaven, is not Mary our greatest wonder-worker, the most powerful enlightener, the wisest counsellor of mankind?

2. Let us admire the abundance of the Divine gifts in Mary. But as we look upon her, so modest, so reserved in the use and manifestation of the gifts with which God had endowed her, so simply devoted to the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to her, let us put aside all desire to escape from the humble duties of our profession.

III. The Graces gratuitously given to Ourselves.

1. Our talents and successes, and the honourable offices we are called upon to fulfil, may be considered as graces gratuitously given, and we have no reason to take any merit to ourselves.

2. Let us be prudent and circumspect, without being sceptical, in judging of extraordinary favours, and instead of looking for anything exceptional for ourselves, let us be satisfied with giving our attention to the practice of the virtues proper to our state.

3. A simple humility will bring us all the help we need to rise to the level of our mission. Let us not fear responsibility, and may the Divine assistance which is granted to Superiors make our obedience easy.

COLLOQUY.

Let us come to God through Mary to renew our offers of devotion to Jesus Christ. Let us show our preference to serve God in obscurity. It will expose us to fewer dangers, and often it is to the greater glory of God.

Ave Maria.

ELEVENTH SATURDAY: THE ACTUAL GRACES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Plan of the Meditation.—From habitual graces and gifts we pass to those transitory but constantly recurring influences by which God turns

us from evil and imparts to all our actions a supernatural character. In the first point we shall consider *actual graces* in their two principal forms, in the second and third the *medicinal* and *salutary graces* bestowed on the Blessed Virgin.

MEDITATION.

"Sine me nihil potestis facere"—Without Me you can do nothing (St. John xv. 5).

First Prelude.—Let us represent to ourselves the house of Nazareth. The Angel of the Lord salutes Mary as full of grace.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may better understand the dignity of our Heavenly Mother, and may grow in humility and thankfulness to God.

I. Actual Grace.

I. 1. God, having decided to raise to His own likeness man, who had been degraded by sin, begins by infusing into him a new nature—sanctifying grace; then by the supernatural virtues He communicates to the faculties of man a power which is beyond the limits of natural activity. The gifts of the Holy Ghost put into the soul heavenly inclinations and generous desires to follow the inspirations from above. Thus, man is prepared to lead a supernatural moral life, and to enrich himself with merits for eternal happiness.

2. Is that all? Is that enough? Is that unworthiness which debarred us from supernatural happiness entirely removed? Two things are still wanting.

(1) Supernatural life has been instilled into the soul, but that soul is naturally sick and feeble, and in danger of falling. Treasures have been given to one who is weak and careless, and liable to be robbed on the way. He needs help to strengthen the life within him, care and assistance to make the most of the power he possesses, and to preserve him from attacks which may easily prove fatal. Such help is *medicinal grace*, a complex favour, a many-sided protection of Divine Providence, by which God saves us from dangerous occasions, not suffering us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. Good influences are made to act upon us ; salutary warnings, powerful examples, interior feelings of consolation or compunction encourage us to do good or deter us from doing evil. Divine assistance assuages the violence of passion, enlightens our understanding, and strengthens our will.

(2) The other kind of actual grace is called by theologians *salutary or elevating grace*, which in order to understand well, let us observe our moral activity. All our deliberate acts follow on other spontaneous acts, on which they depend, as well as on the free choice of our will. Before we can do anything, it is necessary that the thought of it should occur to us. We cannot approve of any design before it is proposed to our judgment. Again, any practical thought suggested to the mind is brought forward by a certain impulse of the will ; hence, without further studying the problem, it is enough to remember that the free working of our minds presupposes certain perceptions and impulsions which do not depend on

our free choice, but leave us our liberty for further action.

Now the question is, to what order do these indeliberate thoughts belong, these spontaneous movements of the will, which—in the first stage, at least—precede the exercise of our supernatural virtues ?

Here is our ship, fully equipped, ready to sail towards the haven of eternal life. What is the impulse which first causes it to move ? Are all those supernatural forces, of which the various parts of a ship are the emblem—that is to say, all those supernatural infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost—to be set to work by a purely natural force ? Shall nature pretend to determine the activity of grace, and be the first principle of all our merits ? Shall such a lowly beginning disturb the harmonious proportion between the end and the means—eternal life and supernatural grace ?

Divine goodness does nothing by halves, and here comes in *salutary or elevating grace.* In a mysterious manner God brings His power to act on our initial activity. The first thought, the first ray of light that illuminates our mind, the first impulse of our will towards what is good, are attributable to our own faculties, and to a supernatural co-operation of God, and this co-operation, which we call *salutary grace,* continues through the whole duration of our act. Thus God anticipates our meritorious acts as truly as He helps us in the performance of them. It is by His grace alone that we think, and will, and do what is good.

II. These considerations should develop in us

1. A profound *humility.* They make us under-

stand better how insignificant we are both in the natural and in the supernatural order.

2. A lively *gratitude* for all that God condescends to work in us.

3. A great *care* not to destroy the work of God in our souls.

II. The Medicinal Graces of the Mother of God.

I. God did more for the Blessed Virgin than merely correct in her an unhealthy tendency inherited from her first parents. He did not merely gave her a remedy for disease, He gave her health. By His preventing action He removed the very principle of inward weakness. That, indeed, is saying too little. From the first instant of her life He so regulated the passions and appetites of that privileged being that they were always entirely under her control. Holy and pure, she was able to face all difficulties without danger, prepared to conquer in all.

II. 1. As for ourselves, let us acknowledge our weakness, and confess that if the Providence of God had not removed the occasions, we should have been in constant danger of falling into the gravest sins.

2. But let us not despair. If we are compelled by circumstances to incur danger, or if we do it for the sake of God's glory, He can and will find us a way of escape. Look at the martyrs. They were forbidden to expose themselves rashly to danger, but when they were brought before the judge they took no thought how or what they

should answer to the questions by which it was sought to entrap them. The Holy Ghost enlightened them, as He supported them under the torture.

3. Is it difficult to remember the dangerous occasions from which we have been saved, and the good influences which have been used on our behalf? These are the special benefits of grace.

4. We can make others partakers of this same grace of God if we edify them by our conversation and example.

III. The Salutary Graces of the Mother of God.

I. We must think of the salutary graces of the Mother of God as the repeated invitations of the King of kings to the most favoured of His creatures, calling her to the steps of His throne. "Daughter of Sion," He says, "recognize all the charm and beauty that I have given thee. These treasures and graces are destined for a better world than that in which thou abidest. Come, rise to the Heaven where I dwell." "But, Lord," she pleads, "the distance is so immense." "Dost thou need wings? Behold them. My grace will raise thee and bring thee hither. Take thy flight, and fear not."

And Mary obeys. It may be said of her in truth that she shall go from virtue to virtue till she sees the face of the God of gods in Sion.

II. 1. Let us rejoice at the goodness of God, who addressed such invitations to our holy Mother.

2. Without comparing our privileges to those of

the Blessed Virgin, we must recognize that our soul also is provided with treasures not destined for this world. We are made for something better than this earth.

Let there be nothing mean or sordid in our aims and desires. Let us resolve to do great things. If others are content to crawl, let not their want of ambition retard our flight. Let us think only with pity of those who will not look at the splendid view that is offered them.

COLLOQUY.

Let us address ourselves to Mary, and then to Jesus, with confidence and humility—with confidence, "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13); with humility, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then a prayer will spring from our hearts. Thrice will we invoke the Lord, and beseech Him to say to us at least, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Ave Maria.

TWELFTH SATURDAY: THE SACRAMENTAL GRACES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Plan of the Meditation.—In the Christian life, to sanctification by works is added sanctification by the Sacraments. By this means also grace was poured out upon the Mother of God. We shall consider—(1) the *nature of sacramental graces;* (2) their *abundance in Mary;* and (3) the *best means of profiting by the Sacraments.*

MEDITATION.

" Visita nos in salutari tuo "—Visit us with Thy salvation (Ps. cv. 4).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the Cenacle at the moment when the Holy Ghost descends upon Mary and the Apostles.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to imitate Mary in her fervent reception of the Sacraments.

I. Sacramental Graces.

1. We have seen how God communicates His grace to us that we may produce fruits of salvation. He wishes us also to benefit by direct influences of the supernatural order, in which only He and Christ and the instrument by which He condescends to act produce the effect desired. This grace is said to be given *ex opere operato*, because it results from an act done by virtue of the act itself, independently of the worthiness of the minister. This influence is exercised by God as the principal cause. It has been merited by Christ, and it passes to us mysteriously through a divinely instituted rite, which is performed by a lawful minister deputed by God Himself. Such is sacramental grace, which we receive without any co-operation of our own. Look at the new-born child while the water of Baptism is poured upon him. What does he know? What does he do? And yet we see him regenerated, enriched, and sanctified. The same virtue operates in all the Sacraments, even in those which we receive in riper years; but in these last God subordinates their

effects to our own consent, and produces those effects in proportion to the dispositions that He finds in us.

By its double influence sacramental grace, on the one hand, gives us sanctifying grace, or increases it in us; and, on the other hand, it cures the weakness of our present condition, strengthening our faculties with a view to different results, according to the special grace of each sacrament.

2. See in how many ways God comes to our aid to make us strong and holy. We see men of good faith outside the Church sanctifying themselves by the good use of the fragments of holy food which have reached them, while we, to whom such a rich banquet has been offered, remain spiritually weak and hungry. Do not the words of the prophet apply to us, "*Perditio tua, Israel*" (Osee xiii. 9)? Destruction is thy own, O Israel. It is thy own fault if thou perishest of hunger. Let us do justice to the generous bounty of God, and humbly ask His pardon for our spiritual lukewarmness.

II. The Sacramental Graces in Mary.

1. Mary, in the course of her earthly life, reaped the fruit of the sanctification which was accomplished in her. The Divine Maternity was more than a Sacrament for her, for no sacramental virtue can be compared to the wonderful effects which were produced in her soul by the Divine Word, who came to take flesh from her. Yet, though Mary had no need to be purified from sin, it is generally believed that she received Baptism in order to receive in her soul the impression of the

Christian character, to enter by the appointed means into the Church of her Son. The first Christian Pentecost was for her an extraordinary reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. But we must attach the greatest importance to that daily mystical renewal of grace which the Holy Eucharist produced in her soul, replacing in her breast the God-Man to whom she had given birth. Who can imagine or describe the marvellous effects of her union with her Son in this Sacrament of faith and love? Let us think of the infinite virtue of the Sacraments, and the perfect dispositions with which Mary received them, and then we shall have some idea of the height of holiness to which our Blessed Mother must have been raised by these means alone.

2. Let us rejoice with Mary, and take her as our model in our own Communions. If we are conscious sometimes of spiritual coldness and aridity, let us offer to our dear Lord the heart of His Mother, reminding Him of the good Communions she made, and uniting our own to hers—at least, in desire.

III. The Good Use of the Sacraments.

How important it is to approach the Sacraments with holy fervour! When we have fully realized this great truth, let us seek means to improve our own dispositions.

1. Let us be on our guard against receiving them as a mere matter of routine, but let us make careful preparation for every Sacrament we receive, not forgetting that if there are other means of obtain-

ing an increase of sanctifying grace, the Sacraments are the means specially instituted to convey it to us in abundance. Moreover, they contain a particular grace adapted to our necessities, restoring to us in some measure the health and strength we should have had if it had not been for original sin. Let us think of the precious blood of Christ, which merited these blessings for us, and the benefit of which we receive by virtue of these Sacraments.

2. The Sacraments are protestations of faith and hope in Jesus Christ. Let us cultivate these sentiments of faith and hope in ourselves, and make them more and more sincere, that we may give them practical efficacy.

COLLOQUY.

Let us think of the disciples at Emmaus, whose hearts burned within them when Jesus opened to them the Scriptures. Jesus comes to us so often in order to show us how great is His love for us. Let us ask Him through His blessed Mother that we may be consumed with love for Him.

Monstra te esse Matrem.
Show thyself a Mother.

THIRTEENTH SATURDAY: THE SINLESSNESS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall consider in this meditation—(1) *our own sins;* (2) the *sinlessness of Mary;* (3) our *fight against sin.*

MEDITATION.

"Nihil inquinatum in eam incurrit"—No defiled thing cometh into her (Wisd. vii. 25).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves the Blessed Virgin as she replies to the Angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may have a profound reverence for our dear Mother, and the grace to strive with the same earnestness, of which all the Saints have given us an examp'e, to avoid all sin.

I. Our Sins.

I. How useful it is to realize that we are sinners!

1. Suppose we are living now without committing mortal sin. What does the past, the irrevocable past, show us? Stains which would have remained indelible but for the grace of God.

2. Even now, how weak and fickle we are! Do we pay to the God above us the homage that is His due? What anger and impatience we show at the least thing that we do not like! How envious we are of the success of our neighbour! How we exult over his disappointments! How fond we are of exaggerating his faults, and how selfishly indifferent we are to his needs! How severe we are in our judgments of others! And in regard to ourselves, how easily we give way to our passions—envy, covetousness, luxury—and what a high value we set upon our own good qualities! How quickly we are overcome by difficulties! How slow we are to declare ourselves on the side of Jesus Christ! What insincerity there is in our

language, what selfishness in all our motives! Let us examine ourselves, and consider our talents, to see how we have misused them; the commandments of God, to see how we have failed to obey them; the virtues, to note their absence; our daily life, our occupations, our relations, and we shall exclaim with St. Augustine, "Where, Lord, or when have I been without sin?"

II. This reflection is not meant to discourage us, for we must remember at the same time that, such as we are, God bears with us and loves us. But the practical conclusion that we must draw is that our spiritual life has no other foundation than the fatherly mercy of God. We shall then understand better the words of Our Lord, "*Beati misericordes*" —Blessed are the merciful (St. Matt. v. 7).

II. The Sinlessness of the Mother of God.

I. 1. The Council of Trent, following a practically universal tradition, teaches us that Mary was pure from all actual sin, that her will was never in the slightest degree opposed to the will of God.

2. Moreover, this purity was not a simple fact; it was required by the intimate and sublime relations of Mary with God. If nothing defiled could enter Heaven, it was impossible that any stain of sin should profane the living temple, the Heaven reserved for the Divine Word.

3. This preservation from the universal taint is an exceptional privilege, a blessing conferred upon Mary alone of all the children of Adam. The Apostles were confirmed in grace, assured of the friendship of God. They had the gift of *perfect*

perseverance. But Mary alone had that *perfect confirmation* in holiness which saved her from all venial sin. By this gift our blessed Mother led on earth the life that we shall lead in Heaven. But in Heaven our sinlessness will come from the sight of God in His glory; for Mary it was the fruit of the abundance of grace. And by this abundance, as well as by the higher reason of her sinlessness, Mary not only was equal to the Angels, but even surpassed them. Nay, more, we cannot imagine any closer union with God than that enjoyed by His Mother; we cannot conceive in any created being a more complete opposition to sin. Mary, then, attains to the highest possible degree of purity.

4. The sinlessness of Mary is distinguished from the sinlessness of Christ by its proximate cause. Christ possessed in Himself, in the union of His human nature with His Divine person, a perfect exemption from the possibility of doing wrong. The will of Mary, on the contrary, taken by itself, was liable to fail. If it never did fail, she owes that, on the one hand, to her freedom from concupiscence and interior temptations, and to extraordinary actual graces; but, on the other hand, it is the effect of her perfect correspondence with the grace of God. Preserved from all fire of concupiscence, exempt from all unlawful inclination, Mary could not sin. An extraordinary grace was given her that she might not fail, and she corresponded with that grace as freely as she consented to become the Mother of God. Infinitely less exalted than that of her Son, the sinlessness of Mary is such that we may say of her, in the language of Holy

Scripture, that she " could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed ; and could do evil things, and hath not done them " (Ecclus. xxxi. 10).

Let us try to realize as fully as possible the high dignity of Mary.

III. Our Struggle against Sin.

I. The Saints have passed through the most varied experiences, but all have laboured to drive out all sin from their hearts. Let us remember this : God has no need of our services, and we know not what our future may be. Laboriously we sow the seed without knowing whether we shall be here to reap the harvest. The best of our designs may not correspond with the plans of God. But there is one useful task which God certainly desires us to fulfil, and that is to extirpate all sin from our souls. Have we given all the care that we ought to this great work ? If not, let us do so in future.

II. The means to obtain this result are :

1. We must pray, in order that we may receive abundant graces from God.

2. We must control our passions, and resist the first inclination to evil. By these means we shall obtain for ourselves some share of the grace by which Mary was preserved from sin.

3. We must meditate attentively on each of our duties, in order to understand thoroughly the purpose for which they were imposed upon us.

4. We must examine ourselves in order to discover the occasions of our besetting sins, and so to avoid them.

5. In our exercises of piety we must have an enlightened faith, which will always make us prefer quality to quantity, remembering that there is more virtue in one "Our Father" said with reverence and attention than in a hundred said hurriedly and without devotion.

COLLOQUY.

Let us thank our loving Mother for having preserved us by her prayers from falling into greater sins than we have already committed, and pray that we may have courage in our struggle against sin in the future.

Monstra te esse Matrem.
Show thyself our Mother.

FOURTEENTH SATURDAY: THE LIBERTY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The object of this meditation is to put before our eyes our responsibility in the spiritual order, to enable us to realize the truth of the proverb that "God helps those who help themselves," and to rouse us from that state of indolence which is so fatal to progress. We shall consider—(1) the *providential purpose of liberty*, and how carefully God maintains it; (2) *the fruits of liberty in Mary*; (3) *the use which we should make of our liberty*, after the example she has set us.

MEDITATION.

"Gratia ejus in me vacua non fuit, sed abundantius illis omnibus laboravi"—His grace in me

hath not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than all they (1 Cor. xv. 10).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine we hear Mary answering the Angel: "Be it done to me according to thy word."

Second Prelude.—Let us pray earnestly that we may follow the example of our dear Mother, and faithfully co-operate with the grace of God.

I. The Providential Purpose of Liberty in Us.

I. Why does God give us liberty? and what are its limits?

1. The purpose of our liberty. By this we understand liberty as it exists in ourselves, even with the faculty of doing evil. It is certain that the choice of evil is repugnant to the infinite holiness of God, and cannot even be conceived in a will which is the rule of all things; yet it would be wrong to conclude that the faculty of doing evil is a defect, and not a relative perfection of our nature. It must not be forgotten that certain qualities of the creature, the consequences of its own essential imperfection, cannot be found in an infinite being. How precious to us are our bodily eyes! Yet those same eyes would be unsuitable to a pure spirit, and *a fortiori* to God. The liberty of God is that of a will, conformity with which constitutes the goodness of our actions. Our own liberty is that of a will subject to a superior rule.

Our liability to failure is the result of our condition. It renders glory to God and service to ourselves. (1) It glorifies God. By it God sees men coming nearer to Him, not as if drawn in-

voluntarily by some centripetal force, but freely coming to do homage to His perfection. By it also God has an opportunity to display His mercy, and Divine Wisdom is seen playing in the world. Men put forth their energy in various directions without disturbing the order of the world or hindering the execution of the designs of God. (2) It is of service to ourselves. It gives us the credit of not having failed when we might have done so, and of having passed triumphantly through the trial. Perils encountered and difficulties overcome add to the honour and happiness of victory. Happy is he, says the Wise Man, "that could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed; and could have done evil things, and hath not done them" (Ecclus. xxxi. 10).

2. God gives us our liberty to an extent which surprises us, and may even scandalize the impious and the proud. If He helps men to do well, He leaves them at liberty to do ill. He allows them to utter blasphemy and commit sacrilege, to overthrow useful plans by their folly, to ruin the noblest undertakings by their malice, to lose their faith, and hinder the spread of true religion. How mysterious is this liberty, which will make us admire the Divine Wisdom so much more when we see that all these things contribute to the happiness of the elect and the glory of the Almighty!

II. But silent adoration must be followed by action. Look at this fertile field, these stores of fruitful seed. Man made neither the field nor the seed, yet he is responsible for the harvest. The earth will not open to receive the seed, and the seed will not scatter itself in the furrows. We

cannot leave Providence to look after the sowing. It is the same with the fruits of salvation to be produced in our hearts and in the world. We owe everything to God, but we must act ourselves, and ask Him to bless our efforts. We must act upon ourselves, striving against difficulties, and forming our moral and supernatural character ; we must act upon others, to contend against evil, and defend the right. It is useless to lament, and look for miracles. We must use our strength and our intelligence. Spirituality understood in any other way is mere foolishness, doomed to disappointment. Let us examine ourselves seriously to see what use we make of our liberty. Let us remember that the blessing of God enables us to eat the fruit of our labours. Holiness and salvation must be gained by our own efforts.

II. The Fruits of Liberty in Mary.

I. 1. What wide scope God gave to Mary's liberty ! Not only were her acts of virtue accomplished freely, but the fate of the whole human race was left in her hands. The Angel did not force her ; Mary became the Mother of God by her own free choice.

2. But how glorious were the fruits of liberty in those blessed hands ! For the world, Jesus Himself, whom we receive from Mary ; for herself, the summit of merit and glory. No doubt the first advance was made by God. " By the grace of God, I am what I am " (1 Cor. xv. 10). " He that is mighty hath done great things to me " (St. Luke i. 49). But Mary may add : " This grace

has not been received in vain. I have co-operated with it; I have followed the path God pointed out to me; I have accepted His invitations; I have risen to the heights to which I was called. The graces of God, which have been multiplied in me by my willingness to follow them, have borne me to the highest pinnacle of glory."

II. The gift of liberty shines with the greatest radiance in Mary. While we congratulate our dear Mother, let us thank God for the infinite wisdom and magnificence of His designs upon us.

III. The Use we must make of Our Liberty.

I. The best use of our liberty consists in corresponding with the twofold grace of God to the best of our power.

1. *With medicinal grace*, by prudence and caution. How often, weak and fragile as we are, we rush into danger, whereas Mary, so protected within herself, sought the shelter of the Temple, lived a life of retirement, and fortified herself by all the safeguards proper to her sex and condition.

2. *With supernatural grace*, by the diligence we use to make ourselves perfect, and to fulfil the Apostolic mission which in some degree or another has been entrusted to us.

Our faults may be a cowardly *dissimulation* which pretends ignorance, and seeks to excuse itself by an affectation of weakness; a slothful *selfishness* which sacrifices good to ease, to the false peace of idleness and indifference; or a mean-spirited diffidence which is afraid to make an effort.

II. This is why we make so little progress, why so much evil is done around us. Let us work, then, without presumption, but with all the energy we possess.

COLLOQUY.

Let us humbly prostrate ourselves before God in the presence of the Blessed Virgin, and ask pardon for our spiritual sloth. Let us accept the full responsibility of our liberty, and work manfully for ourselves and for others.

Ave Maris Stella! iter para tutum.
Hail, thou Star of Ocean! make our way secure.

FIFTEENTH SATURDAY: THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The assistance of a guardian Angel, another beautiful form of the grace of God, is not connected with the state of original sin, nor does it presuppose any positive imperfection or anything unworthy of the Immaculate Mother of God our Saviour. Mary, then, had her guardian Angel. The Gospel is silent on the subject of the relations between the Blessed Virgin and her good Angel; but from general principles of theology we can infer what these relations were, and they will furnish us with matter for a meditation which will give honour to Mary and the Angels of God.

We shall consider—(1) *the duty of the guardian Angel in general* in the plan of Divine Providence; (2) the *conduct of the Angel towards Mary;* and (3) the *conduct of Mary towards the Angel.*

MEDITATION.

"Angelis suis mandavit de te"—He hath given His Angels charge over thee (Ps. xc. 11).

I. The Plan of Divine Providence.

I. 1. The noblest of our influences is that which we exercise over other rational creatures. What is the use of acting upon matter if there is no one to admire or benefit by the result? Work which does no good to anyone is simply labour thrown away. And among the influences which we can possess over others, the best of all is the action of the supernatural and Divine order.

But is there no risk that one man's gain may be the other's loss? Does not the honour of influencing another person turn to his detriment in depriving him of the privilege of being under the immediate guidance of God?

Let us praise the wisdom and goodness of God, who makes all things work together for our eternal welfare.

2. Let us see what is going on *among men*. All those who are willing may labour in the Lord's vineyard, and fulfil the glorious mission of contributing to the great work of Christ—the salvation of souls. What sinner is converted, what good man is sanctified, without being indebted to some other, to the force of some good word, the eloquence of some edifying example? The Sacraments, those channels divinely instituted to bring down upon us the grace of Christ, do not produce their results except by the intervention of their legitimate minister, who, again, is a man.

God reserves to Himself the principal part in this work. Paul may plant—that is to say, he may preach the doctrine of salvation—Apollo may water, but God alone can give the increase (1 Cor. iii. 7). The spoken word which falls on the ear becomes the thought and the happy inspiration of good. This thought and this inspiration, ennobled by the mysterious assistance of God, constitute, with the free consent of the subject, the principle of an act which may merit Heaven. And in the Sacraments, if Peter baptizes, Christ baptizes still more ; in other words, Peter is only the instrument of which God makes use to operate supernaturally in the soul.

3. The influence of *Angels upon men* may be considered in the same manner. Even the celestial hierarchies are placed one above the other, and it is the teaching of St. Thomas that the spirits of the higher orders communicate their brightness to those of lower rank, and to men.

The full extent of this communication of benefits among rational beings will be only fully understood by us in eternity.

A Jewish tradition leads us to believe in the intervention of Angels in the manifestations of God recorded in the Old Testament. From a literal interpretation of the Scripture it would appear that the Jewish law was dictated to Moses by God Himself, and yet St. Paul expressly tells us that God communicated it by the ministry of Angels (Gal. iii. 19).

The Angels, then, have their part in the outward and visible bestowal of God's favours, and their part is equally important in connection with inward

and special graces. They have their own way of suggesting holy thoughts and feelings, of leading us to good, and turning us away from evil.

II. *Conclusions.*—The sublime work to which we are called suggests the following questions :

1. Have we ever thought that we were all born Apostles ? Do we occupy ourselves sufficiently with the good that we have the opportunity of doing during our lives ? If it is our lot to have been called to the sacred ministry, do we sufficiently realize the great honour which is conferred upon us ? If we really felt this, with what care and what joy we should discharge these holy functions !

2. The Angels not only see the efforts we make, but give us their support. Let the invocations we address to them testify our eagerness to accept their help. Acting before their eyes, and with their assistance, we shall do more good, our intentions will be purer, and we shall escape the dangers to which we are liable in the holiest occupations. Does not our Lord remind us of the presence of the Angels in order to inspire us with a horror of scandal ? (St. Matt. xviii. 10). Let us think of the good which Blessed Peter Faber derived from his fervent devotion to the Angels, the wonders of salvation which he worked in the souls of men.

II. The Guardian Angel in Presence of Mary.

I. We cannot entirely lift the veil which covers the inner life and work of the Angels. But they cannot be displeased by the inquiries we make in a spirit of simple piety, and any details we are

able to gather will be profitable to our souls. Hence we are justified in asking, What were the sentiments of the guardian Angel of Mary, and what were his attitude and his conduct ?

1. The *sentiments*. The guardian Angel of Mary felt an indescribable joy at the sight of the perfections of the Blessed Virgin. This joy was mingled with a holy reverence. Great as this reverence was from his first vision of the extraordinary graces poured out upon the soul of this highly-favoured Virgin, it reached its highest point when the Angel learned of the election which raised her to the dignity of the Mother of God.

2. By his *conduct* he had a double duty to fulfil —to present the homage of Mary at the throne of God, uniting thereto his own humble and fervent supplications ; and to follow all her steps with the tenderest care, sheltering her under his protection, and removing every cause of danger.

II. 1. The good offices of our own guardian Angel are done in our favour with reference to God, ourselves, and the rest of mankind. To God he offers up our prayers, covering up their manifold deficiences. He watches all our actions with benevolence, rejoicing over all our efforts and meritorious deeds, and constantly encourages us to perseverance in good. He defends us against all our enemies, visible and invisible, and preserves us from a thousand misfortunes.

2. What a different life we should lead if a livelier faith showed us our guardian Angel ever at our side ! All fear of man would be removed, and it would cost us but little effort to maintain our fervour. In our prayers and in our acts the re-

membrance of this precious help would fill us with invincible confidence. We should be full of courage and free from anxiety.

III. Mary in Presence of Her Guardian Angel.

I. We may be sure that Mary had a sincere reverence for her good Angel. She, whom we have seen showing such tender consideration for her cousin, could not but treat her Angel guardian with becoming *deference*, and to this sentiment we must add a lively *gratitude;* and it is hardly necessary to mention her perfect *docility* in obeying every call addressed to her in the name of God.

II. We owe similar duties to our guardian Angel, and we cannot fail to see what is required of us by reverence and gratitude. But how are we to show docility to a guide whom we cannot see? How follow the advice of a counsellor whose voice we cannot hear?

It is enough to banish all disorderly affections, and carefully to direct our intentions, remembering that the objects which are marked with the stamp of our holy religion are those at which our guardian Angel advises us to aim. By the peace we shall find in following his counsels and the confidence which will inspire our will we shall know that our good Angel approves our conduct, even if he has not himself suggested it.

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask through Mary that we may have a reverent devotion to our guardian Angel. This

devotion will ensure our own progress, and enable us to exercise a salutary influence over our neighbours.

Ave Maria.

SECOND SECTION

THE VIRTUES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

SIXTEENTH SATURDAY: THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—Before we contemplate the principal virtues of the Blessed Virgin, it will be interesting and profitable to meditate on her progress in sanctification. We have seen that it was possible for Mary to advance. That she did so, and never ceased to do so, we cannot doubt. We shall therefore consider—(1) the *stages of Mary's progress;* and (2) *the means she employed to accomplish it* with such marvellous success.

MEDITATION.

"Quæ est ista quæ progreditur, quasi aurora consurgens?"—Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising? (Cant. vi. 9).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the Blessed Virgin in her home at Nazareth, the principal scene of her sanctification.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask for the grace to unite to an increasing reverence for the Mother of God a perfect correspondence with the graces offered to ourselves.

I. The Degrees of the Sanctification of the Mother of God.

I. 1. In Mary's rapid and continuous progress towards perfection, ecclesiastical tradition permits us to note special epochs of extraordinary spiritual advancement.

From a very early period the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been divided from this point of view into two distinct periods—one anterior to the Divine Maternity, and the other subsequent to it. The first sanctification covers a period of preparation. To use a comparison frequently used in sacred literature, Mary is, then, the white wool which is being prepared to be dipped in the blood of the Lamb. Her grace during that time was modelled after the common type of our grace, which is that of *adopted children*. It differs only from our own in its extraordinary abundance. The second sanctification begins from the moment of her Maternity. When brought near the source of grace, the white wool takes its bright colour therefrom. Mary attains the perfection of the Mother of God—a perfection which is the result of a special union with the Word, and corresponds to a new type accomplished in Jesus Christ. He, besides the infinite holiness of the Divine nature, possesses a special holiness of His own, constituted by the indissoluble union of His human nature with His Divine Person.

2. Rich in this double sanctity, Mary goes on step by step to the consummation of her perfection in glory. Her route is marked out by sanctifying

events: The great trials, the type of which is the Cross; and the great consolations, the type of which is Pentecost.

II. The great distance which separates us from Mary does not prevent us from applying the lessons of Mary's history to ourselves. Between the first and the last moment of our Christian life are various intermediate stages. From Baptism we are led on to the reception of the Holy Eucharist; and thence-forward the frequent visits of Christ, prolonged in the admirable effects of the charity which they are intended to strengthen and develop, constitute a practically permanent presence, which is destined to give, so to speak, a new form to our sanctification. Then comes the choice of a state of life. Marriage, which most men choose, is blessed for the Christian by a Sacrament which offers him special means of sanctification. What, then, shall we say of the entrance into religious life or the ordination to the priesthood?

There are other times of special sanctification—great trials involving, it may be, the destruction of all our most cherished earthly plans; and great consolations which, if accepted with childlike humility, increase our courage and confidence.

While we bless God for the manifold gifts of His Providence, should we not confess with sorrow how little profit we have derived from them? Let us not be discouraged, but rather let the thought of what we have lost make us more careful in the future.

II. The Means of Sanctification of the Mother of God.

I. 1. Let us remark first that Mary in every place and every occurrence of her life found an occasion of sanctification—at the Temple, at Nazareth, at Bethlehem, at Cana, beneath the Cross and in the Cenacle, in her greatest joys and her greatest sorrows. What a mistake it is, as the author of the " Imitation " says, to think we must change our surroundings in order to find means of sanctification. The Saints lived in all climates, and in the most varied circumstances. Let us, like them, be fully persuaded that there is no place nor environment in which we cannot have means of sanctification, and let us cheerfully accept whatever our lot may be, and improve the graces which are offered therein.

2. The means of sanctification of which the Blessed Virgin made use are all summed up in the worthy reception of the Sacraments, and the practice of all the good works that God required of her. These good works consisted, above all, in the faithful performance of all the duties of her state, for Mary was not exempt from any prescription of the Old Law. Then there were all the good actions which were suggested to her by her perfect will to do right under the influence of the grace and direction of the Holy Spirit.

II. Every serious plan of sanctification must be modelled on that of Mary. We have to receive the Sacraments worthily, and to multiply our meritorious actions. How many Christians are in the habit of saying that they would willingly follow

the Divine inspirations if only they had the means of recognizing them, and they are foolish enough to wait for some miraculous communication to come from God to enlighten them. Our Lord might well say to them: "Do you forget that My Gospel and My Church teach you My will?" And are not these certainly inspirations from God? (1) The inspiration to obey every just law, every lawful command. Who is it who demands this obedience, if not God? And He will have it entire and prompt and cheerful. A grudging and reluctant obedience doubles the pain and lessens the merit. (2) The inspiration to do any good action that is within our power. The beginning of every one of these is found in a preventing grace, which enlightens our intelligence and quickens our will. And is not this an inspiration? (3) The inspiration to use a careful diligence in every good work without troubling ourselves scrupulously over unimportant details. Who can doubt that this is an expression of God's will?

It may be that extraordinary promptings from on high come but seldom, but our fidelity to daily graces will make us ready to follow God's more special communications when He is pleased to send them to us. By this path of perfect fidelity our spiritual progress will be rapid and sure.

COLLOQUY.

Let us recall the history of our sanctification. If there have been happy moments for which we shall thank God, there are times when we have lamentably failed through our want of confidence

and generosity. Let us offer to Mary, and through her to Jesus, new resolutions, with a prayer that they will accept them and hasten their realization.

Ave Maria.

SEVENTEENTH SATURDAY: THE FAITH THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Meritorious Liberty of that Faith.

Plan of the Meditation.—In this sceptical age, is there any more useful lesson that we could learn at the feet of the Blessed Virgin than that of a strong, enlightened, and practical faith? Strengthened by the support and the example of our Immaculate Mother, let us strive energetically to obtain from the goodness of God this inestimable gift of a faith which shall be the peace and light of our lives, and the guiding principle of all our actions. This meditation will be devoted to the *will to believe—i.e.*, the free act, made by the grace of God, which decides that our intelligence will accept the truth. We shall consider—(1) the *free faith of Mary;* (2) *the secret of that faith;* (3) the *practical conclusions* we should draw.

MEDITATIONS.

"Beata quæ credidisti"—Blessed art thou that hast believed (St. Luke i. 45).

First Prelude.—Let us briefly retrace the scene of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. An Angel is sent down by God from Heaven to propose to Mary that she shall become the Mother of God. Mary, troubled for the moment at the words

with which the Angel salutes her, suggests the impossibility, humanly speaking, of her becoming a Mother without breaking her vow of virginity. The Angel reminds her that nothing is impossible with God, and informs her that her cousin Elizabeth is also the object of a manifestation of His almighty goodness. This is sufficient for Mary. She believes the words of the Angel, and on the faith of these words consents to become the Mother of God.

Second Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves the room in which these events took place.

Third Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may understand more fully the nature of faith, and cherish the dispositions which may strengthen and develop this virtue in our souls.

I. The Free and Meritorious Faith of Mary.

I. The excellence of the faith of Mary is attested by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers. In the Gospel, Elizabeth is moved by the Holy Ghost to congratulate Mary on her faith, and the Fathers of the Church recognize in it the principle of her Maternity and her greatness. With them it is an axiom, *Fide concepit, fide peperit.* By faith Mary conceived the Word of God, by faith she brought Him into the world. This faith of Mary embraced all the truths contained in the deposit of the old revelation. But let us contemplate it in the increase it received at the moment when Mary consented to believe in her own Maternity. Let us go over the scene in our minds. Do we see anything which compelled her belief? We see that Mary

showed a prudent docility in believing, but she might equally have refused to believe. The proposition was put before her with circumstances which justified her in believing, but there were difficulties which would have justified her in refusing to believe it. The agreement of the Angel's words with the ancient prophecies, the holiness of his aspect, the consciousness that his only desire was the glory of God, the revelation of another wonderful occurrence which could easily be verified —all these were the enlightening circumstances to which Mary directed her attention. But the strangeness of the message, the apparent impossibility of the miracle announced, the improbability of her being chosen for its accomplishment, would have justified her in doubting or demanding some evident sign before believing. She did neither, but, content with the sufficient light which had been given her, she commanded her reason to accept without hesitation the word of God. Instead of living in painful uncertainty, she had thus the joy and merit of believing.

II. How good it is for us to remember that faith is free; that it is, like so many other things in our life, a matter of the will. Guided and aided by grace, we believe because we wish to believe.

1. The freedom of the act of faith is necessary to make it meritorious. If we only believed because we were convinced by evidence which our intellects could not resist, what glory should we give to God, and what would He find in us worthy of reward? The light of our minds would be like that of the stars of the firmament—splendid, indeed, but necessary and without merit.

heard within herself no discordant voice ; she had no temptation to neglect the duties of the faith for the sake of sensuality or self-love. Being perfectly submissive to the will of God, she did not question His sovereign right to impose a revelation, and choose His own manner of proving it. With her perfectly-balanced judgment, she knew that above her was a God, not only incapable of deceit or error, but also desirous of communicating essential truth to His creatures. How could He permit that error should put on the likeness of truth, or that sincere search after truth should only result in the anguish of doubt ? And so with childlike simplicity she went to God, and gave herself up to Him with a faith whose firmness was measured by the Divine infallibility.

II. These dispositions show us how easy it is to believe. We are not called upon to give our assent without due deliberation, but we are asked to listen to the appeal which reason itself makes to us in our hours of calm, and in the silence of the passions. This shows us on the one hand an Almighty God watching over His creatures, a God whose truth and sovereignty are infinite ; and on the other hand a holy religion, sublime in its doctrine and precepts, and offering magnificent rewards. The wisdom and virtue of its Founder, which defy calumny, the wonderful works done by Him in its name, the history and duration of this religion, its incomparable superiority over all others, the manifest impossibility of replacing it by any system of philosophy—all these things give indisputable evidence in its favour. When this religion declares itself to be revealed by God, the

man who accepts it declares his belief in the absolute sovereignty of God, and the infinite truth of God's word. He starts from that, and by implicit faith in that truth, and complete submission to that authority, he arrives at a knowledge of all the doctrines which God is pleased to reveal to him.

Let us thank God for the gift of faith. Let us take delight in meditating on the striking confirmations of the Catholic religion, and seek to strengthen the dispositions which lead us to God with childlike trust and affection.

III. Practical Conclusions.

The preceding considerations lead us to these practical conclusions, which are of the highest importance to our happiness and security.

1. We should avoid an excessive subtlety of the intellect, and a habit of concerning ourselves too much with objections, or we shall fall into a state of continual vacillation, in which we shall lose all fixity of purpose, and become incapable of grasping the truth.

2. We should allow our minds to dwell on the advantages of the faith rather than on difficulties permitted by God to leave a pretext for unbelief, and to render more complete the homage which the believer pays to infinite truth.

3. We should put away all gloomy and misanthropic ideas. Whatever leads to discouragement tends to weaken our faith, and the miserable results of pessimism are sufficient to show its falsehood.

4. We should take care to strengthen the empire of the will within us.

5. We should cultivate humility and confidence in God.

6. We should pray often for an abundant grace of faith.

COLLOQUY.

At the sight of the great number of those who are still in darkness, let us thank God for the gift of faith. Let us ask Him, through the Blessed Virgin, that our path may always be illuminated by its light. Let us pray for the preservation of the faith in Catholic countries. Let us make frequent acts of submission to the will of God. Let us come to Him for protection, like children coming to their father. Finally, let us resolve to renew our act of faith frequently, and never omit it in our morning prayers.

My God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.

Ave Maria.

EIGHTEENTH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Glorious Humility of that Faith.

Plan of the Meditation.—If faith is free, it is important that we should be disposed to believe. The object of the present meditation is to enable us to understand better the merit of believing, and to discover in the very humility of our faith a motive for being jealous and proud of it. We shall consider the humility of faith as—

(1) *glorious to God;* and (2) *glorious to man;* and, lastly, we shall consider the legitimate *pride of believing.*

MEDITATION.

"*Ecce ancilla Domini*"—*Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (St. Luke i. 38).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves the sanctuary of Nazareth, where Mary reveals to us the secret of her faith and her life in her answer to the Angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may have a great reverence for the faith in order that we may be more and more closely attached to it, and develop it in us, following the call of God and the example of the Blessed Virgin.

I. Humility Glorious to God.

The faith of Mary may be compared to a great oak, whose topmost branches touch the clouds, while its roots are deep in the bowels of the earth. To understand that faith we must realize the depth of the feeling which prompted her answer: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." That we may be animated in some measure by the same sentiments, let us analyze the submission contained in a deliberate act of faith. The perfection of this submission will give us the most exact idea of the faith of the Blessed Virgin.

1. Faith introduces us into a new and supernatural world, in comparison of which we are as nothing. When we enter into this world, we confess our nothingness, and accept with confi-

dence the new destiny to which God in His wisdom and goodness designs to call us.

2. The true believer rejects the presumption of the Pharisees, who shut their eyes to the wonders which our Blessed Lord scattered before them, and made their assent conditional on some sign of their own choosing. He is content with the proofs which are offered him, and says: "Lord, I leave to Thy wisdom to pour such light on Thy words that they may be clear to the humble of heart, while the proud grope vainly in the darkness."

3. By the firmness of his faith the Christian humbles his reason before the mystery, prepared to accept on the word of God apparent contradictions, to accept them rather than the evidence of his own senses. No curious questions, no specious objections, succeed in disturbing the peace which he finds in God. He is ready to admit anything rather than doubt the infinite truth and fatherly Providence of his Creator.

II. 1. God, in inviting us to believe, offers us the means of glorifying Him in a high degree. Let us thank Him with all our hearts, and show ourselves eager to correspond with His grace. What is more fitting than to humble our reason before the Divine wisdom, and to confess our nothingness before our Creator? Let us, then, ratify the acts of humility we have made in the past, and make acts as perfect as we can in the future.

2. The glory which man gives to God by humbling himself confirms our faith. Truth, not error, gives glory to God, and the truth of the Catholic faith is proved by its bringing us

nearer to God than any other religion. If it has its end in God, the reason is that it comes from Him.

II. Humility Glorious to Man.

I. Man voluntarily humbles himself, and God replies by gloriously exalting him. Mary's submission was the prelude to her Divine Maternity To what lofty heights does God raise us when we humble ourselves to believe!

Some reflections on the nature and purpose of faith will show the honour God does us in inviting us to believe His word.

1. (1) If He had chosen, He might have revealed to us nothing of Himself and the magnificent destiny which His goodness has reserved for us. But then we should have known nothing of the end of our existence, the object of our efforts, or the splendour of future rewards. Without desire, without hope of Heaven, without filial love towards Him who has prepared these rewards for us, we should have passed our lives like timid slaves of a God who wishes to be our Father. How much more worthy it is of intelligent beings to go forward towards the goal of our existence with full knowledge of what is before us!

(2) Instead of leaving us room for the exercise of our faith, God might have given us the most rigorous proof of the truths He has revealed, but in that case our progress in the spiritual life would have been guided by no higher rules than those which direct our conduct in earthly affairs.

Why, then, revelation? Because God wishes us to know the nature of the higher life He

offers us, and the sublime end to which it is to lead us.

Why, then, faith? Because God wishes the knowledge which leads us to Him to rest on Him and His authority alone. He wishes to be the Truth which enlightens our supernatural activity, as He is the happiness which crowns it. He is our Friend, and friendship dictates confidence. He is our Father, and the child who cannot see and judge for himself begins by trusting his parents. Divine strength is given us. By faith we use that strength towards the attainment of a Divine object.

2. Such are the essential and principal purposes of faith and revelation. They furnish us, moreover, with the help of which humanity in its present condition has need, in order to possess with sufficient certainty the higher truths of the natural order.

3. Faith is the meeting of God, who comes down from Heaven, and man, who, humbling himself before his Creator, desires to ascend thereto. It is the union of our souls with sublime, ineffable Truth; it is a light which keeps us from falling into grievous error.

No knowledge that we possess attains to so high an object; no knowledge is more certain, or has so firm a foundation, or brings into play such sublime forces—those of our own higher faculties and those of God, who vouchsafes us a special help in each act of faith.

In the use of our senses we exercise faculties which we possess in common with the animals. A hundred times more excellent is the rational life which rests on the judgment of our intelligence,

Thanks to faith, our higher life is established wholly on the word of God, who is infinite Truth. It is faith which opens to us this life. To those who have not received Baptism in their infancy, the first graces are given to lead them to the act of faith, and by that act to hope and charity. And this dawn of a Divine life is also its last twilight. The gloomy darkness of spiritual death only descends on a man with the extinction of his faith. While faith lasts, the Divine image is never entirely defaced. In the mire of sin God still discerns a spark of sacred fire ready to be rekindled when a humble good-will exposes it to the sun of grace, as the mud of the well, in which the priests had hidden the fire of the altar before the Jews were led into captivity in Babylon, burst under the influence of the sun into a great flame, which burned up the sacrifices and the wood on which they were laid (2 Macha. i. 19-22).

All acts of faith are made by means of the supernatural strength which God has bestowed on our souls. Nay, more, not one of them is made without a new and special intervention of God.

II. How grateful we should be to God for our faith! How highly we should value that great gift! What a misfortune it would be to lose it! Let us never imitate the rashness of those Christians who expose their faith to all kinds of dangers. Let us defend the faith in ourselves, and be careful to guard it in our children and dependants. To this end, let us help the cause of Christian education by all means in our power, and take away from the hands of the poor and the young all publications dangerous to religion and morality.

III. The Legitimate Pride of Faith.

We ought to think it an honour to believe. This follows naturally from what has been said already. But what do we mean by pride in believing?

I. If we are *happy* in believing, we shall profess our full acceptance of all the dogmas of faith without regard to human respect, which lowers us in our own eyes and in the eyes of all sensible men.

II. If we are *jealous* of our faith and of the honour due to it, we shall prudently distinguish between the word of God and any word of man, and give to the former alone the supreme assent of faith. We are bound to do this, because we know that God cannot lie; but we must not be too ready to accept propositions which can only be the objects of an imperfect kind of faith, for when we are compelled to retract our assent from something which we thought we had accepted as of faith, the result is trouble to ourselves and scandal to others. For this reason, without utterly denying the possibility of such things, we must be very careful about believing in extraordinary interventions of God in the affairs of this world. Interior feelings, words, or presentiments in ourselves or in others may sometimes seem to us inspirations, or revelations, or extraordinary manifestations of grace. We must beware of accepting them as such without very good grounds, and even after diligent inquiry we must not be too certain of our conclusions. Above all, we must not confuse probability with certainty, nor human evidence with Divine assurance.

Let us not forget that the Church does not ask

us to make an act of faith in miraculous occurrences not contained in the deposit of revealed truth. Pious beliefs, though they may be permitted or encouraged, are not covered by the infallibility of the Church. Such beliefs may give rise to the institution of a feast, but in that case we must distinguish between the object of the devotion, which is founded on solid grounds of theology, and the occasion which has suggested a special manifestation of piety.

A wise prudence in such matters will save us from falling into error, without giving encouragement to a half-scepticism which is inconsistent with the simplicity of a living faith. It will allow us to admit new facts in the supernatural world on human evidence, and will save us from being shocked or scandalized if stories which we have long believed to be true turn out to be devoid of historical foundation.

COLLOQUY.

Let us try to realize the honour of being numbered among the faithful, and meditate on the words of the Church : " Lord, to serve Thee is to reign." And while we accept with gratitude the invitation to become great by submission to our Creator, let us implore Him through Mary and her dear Son to keep us in the true religion, and to develop in us that humility and that prudence which will ensure to us the happiness of a sincere and enlightened faith.

Ave Maria.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

NINETEENTH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Trials of that Faith.

Plan of the Meditation.—God frequently subjects the faith of His elect to a threefold trial—they *do not see;* they *do not understand;* they *are deceived by appearances.* Let us consider these trials in Mary, in order to find useful lessons for ourselves.

MEDITATION.

"Beati qui non viderunt, et crediderunt"—Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed (St. John xx. 29).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves the poor stable at Bethlehem, and contemplate the Blessed Virgin kneeling in adoration before the infant Jesus.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may understand more clearly the purpose of the trials of our faith, in order that we may derive greater profit from them, and may more triumphantly surmount them.

I. The Trial of Faith through want of Sight.

1. Nothing in the infant Jesus announced the sublime mission which He was to fulfil. Being "in all things made like unto His brethren" (Heb. ii. 17), the God-Man hid His glory, and took upon Himself all the reality of infancy, of weakness, and of a most humble profession. What a dis-

appointment for the Jews, who expected a very different Messias! Mary, without seeing, believed.

II. In our day, too, the believer sees the good things of this world which attract his attention, but he does not see the eternal treasures which faith bids him hope for.

He feels the allurements of forbidden objects and pleasures, but he does not perceive the eternal delights which require him to sacrifice them.

He sees the crowd of men running greedily in pursuit of riches, honours, and pleasure; but he does not see the glorious legions who celebrate their victory in Heaven.

He hears the taunts and gibes and sneers of men, but he does not hear the voice of God or the Angels who applaud and encourage him.

He is present every day at the spectacle of sins and blasphemies which escape punishment. He sees the Church scorned and persecuted, but he does not see the Jerusalem above which exults in endless victory.

How do we bear these trials of our faith? Let us beware of trusting too much to our feelings. Repeated acts of faith will make us strong.

II. The Trial of Faith through want of Understanding.

I. A pious meditation leads us at first to think of the whole economy of the life and death of Our Lord being clearly made known to the Blessed Virgin; but does not our human wisdom lead us

astray in this supposition? Is it not more probable that the mysterious counsels of God left His Mother to enjoy all the triumphs of faith? The Gospel certainly tells us that some of the words addressed by the Child Jesus to His Mother, when she found Him in the Temple, were not understood by her. What did she do then? She knew that these words contained heavenly virtue, and kept them in her heart, as in a casket worthy of enclosing jewels of great price.

II. Such is the second trial of our faith—the mystery of it, the difficulty of understanding it. How easy it would be to overcome the temptations of the flesh if our intelligence were fully satisfied by conclusive evidence as to the points we have to believe!

Let us learn, like Mary, to keep with care and humility the words of God that we do not understand. Let us have sufficient confidence in God to believe that we shall never regret having made the submission of our intelligence, and awaited with patience the full clearness of the eternal vision.

III. The Trial of Faith through apparent Contradictions.

I. Mary saw no visible signs of the coming of a glorious and eternal kingdom; on the contrary, everything seemed to point to defeat. Jesus seemed defeated always and everywhere—in His hidden life, when He saved Himself by flight from the sword of the assassins; in His public life, when few believed in Him, and His relations themselves

refused to follow Him ; defeated, above all, in His death. And yet Mary's faith never wavered.

II. Faith shows its strength in going on its way in spite of difficulties. It must not be daunted or shaken by the greatest difficulties or the most incomprehensible mysteries.

Let us understand well what is the value of this homage paid to the veracity of our Heavenly Father. Can we truly say, in reciting the act of faith, " My God, I believe in Thee above all things," if some apparent contradiction or some objection that we cannot answer is sufficient to change our faith into voluntary hesitation and doubt ? Is God not worthy of a more absolute confidence ? Is it right to be overcome by difficulties which prove at most only the weakness of our intelligence, and do not in any way shake the real foundations of our faith ? How many difficulties which appear insuperable disappear as it were of themselves !

COLLOQUY.

Let us delight to come to Jesus through Mary, and renew our act of faith in Him, and assure Him that we realize the happiness of that perfect trust which believes in Him without seeing, without understanding ; believes in spite of difficulties, putting His word and His goodness above sense and reason. Let us ask Him for light and grace to offer that homage with ever-increasing fervour.

AVE MARIA.

TWENTIETH SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Triumphs of that Faith.

Plan of the Meditation.—From the trials of faith we pass to its victories. Faith gives us a threefold victory—in the *grace* it obtains for us, in making us superior to circumstances of the present time, and in the *beatific vision* for which it is the *preparation.* These will be the three points of our meditation.

MEDITATION.

" Per fidem vicerunt regna, adepti sunt repromissiones "—By faith they conquered kingdoms, obtained promises (Heb. xi. 33).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves the house of Zachary, and the room in which the interview between Mary and her cousin Elizabeth took place. Elizabeth proclaims Mary blessed because she believed in the accomplishment of the things that were spoken to her by the Lord.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly ask for grace to be firmly convinced of the priceless blessing of faith.

I. Faith a Source of Triumphant Grace.

I. 1. Before granting particular graces, God ordinarily demands a great act of faith. In the Old Testament, Abraham was required to believe that the son whom he was prepared to sacrifice

would be the inheritor of the promises. During the whole of His earthly life Our Lord demanded faith before showing His power. The want of faith puts an obstacle to the working of miracles. The intensity of faith triumphs over impossibilities. There was no exception to this rule in the history of the honour conferred upon the Blessed Virgin. When God was about to confer upon her the supreme dignity of her Divine Maternity, to open out before her eyes a more glorious prospect than that which revealed to the first patriarch the victory of his descendants, before revealing to her the blessing by which all mankind should benefit through her, He asked her to believe in wonders unheard of—that she should become a mother while still remaining a virgin ; that the Son whom she should bring forth should be the glorious inheritor in whom all the promises should be fulfilled. God required that Mary should be the first to replace faith in a Redeemer to come by faith in a Redeemer conceived and born of her own womb. According to the teaching of the Fathers, Mary was to bring forth Jesus spiritually by faith before bringing Him physically into the world.

2. God requires, moreover, a faith which shall persevere in spite of difficulties. Abraham continued to believe in his vocation, and that of Isaac, even when he took the sword to sacrifice his son. But the perseverance of Mary was still more remarkable. Her faith in the royal mission of her Son never failed through the inglorious years of the childhood and youth of Jesus, through all the contradictions of His public life, and, above all,

through the unutterable agony and humiliation of His passion and even of His death on the Cross.

II. We in our turn are called upon by God to show our faith by our works. We are specially called upon in these days to believe in Jesus, the Word Incarnate and Saviour of the world, and we must persevere in that faith, in spite of the contemptuous scepticism which calls itself by the name of science, and even in spite of the apparent contradictions in the history of the persecuted Church. Before us is spread out a promised land more beautiful than that which was shown to Abraham, but we shall only reach it by a firm and constant faith.

II. Faith raising Us above the Present Time.

I. 1. It is good to be above the evils of this life; it is perhaps better to show oneself superior to good fortune. Faith assures us of superiority to both. St. Paul describes the victories of faith in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith," he says, "Abraham obeyed to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance: and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith Sara also herself, being barren, received strength to conceive seed, even past the time of age: because she believed that He was faithful who had promised. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son: accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead. By faith Moses chose rather to be

afflicted with the people of God than to have the pleasure of sin for a time, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians. For he looked unto the reward." In short, the Apostle recognizes in faith a perpetual victory over the temptation of present good and the fear of present evil. Faith shows us that the joys and sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come. It sustains our courage and our hope even when all seems lost.

2. Let us see how this superiority is exemplified in the Blessed Virgin. Before the birth of the Messias, faith taught her to place the honour of virginity above all the joys of maternity and family life. It enabled her to support all the sacrifices and the interior suffering reserved for the Mother of God; it sustained her courage through all the trials of her life.

II. Is faith the principle of victory for us? Every day offers us opportunities, great or small, of meritorious self-denial. Without some sacrifice we can never attain the spirit of prayer, or recollection, or holiness; we can never be charitable or generous, or fulfil all the duties of a truly Christian life. Are there not light sufferings, and, above all, frequent personal humiliations that we must endure, or public humiliations that we are called upon to share as Catholics, or priests, or religious? In all our trials our strength and courage will fail us if we are not supported by a lively and steadfast faith

III. Faith a Preparation for the Eternal Vision.

I. Faith is the light of the present life, and gives us a vision of the life to come.

1. It is the light of the present life. How it makes us understand all the events of our earthly pilgrimage! Faith tells us what we are, and what we have to do. It gives us the key of the great problem raised by the evils of this life, and even by its blessings. It enlightens us on our present and our future. It gives the power which reason alone does not possess, to discover with sufficient clearness and completeness the chain of duties which bind us to God and our eternal destiny. To convince us of this, it is enough to look at the state of those who have given up their faith. For a time, being still imbued with Christian ideas, they flatter themselves that they can construct a system of morality of which all that is good is merely copied from the Christian religion. But little by little all trace of the original is lost, and then what fixed belief remains to them? What obligations do they acknowledge as binding? What answer can they give to the perplexing enigma of human destiny? All is contention, darkness, and doubt.

2. It gives us a vision of Heaven. Other conditions, it is true, are required, but that of faith is indispensable. "Faith," says St. Augustine, "enables you to believe what you do not see. It merits for you the sight of what you believe." And for this reason he declared that Mary was more blessed in having conceived Christ in her

heart by faith than in having borne Him in her womb. We, too, may gaze on Mary at the summit of heavenly bliss, and exclaim with Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou that hast believed!"

II. Let these considerations dispose us by the grace of God to make acts of faith with fervour and devotion, and let us never cease to thank God for this priceless gift of faith.

COLLOQUY.

Let us rejoice with Mary over her faith, and pray that we may share it, and that we may be among those earnest Christians who rejoice to offer to their Saviour and their God a faith which grows in intensity the more it is reviled and contradicted.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE FAITH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Daily Practice of that Faith.

Plan of the Meditation.—In the devout life faith is the assenting to something which we do not see. It points out the duty which we should necessarily be compelled to fulfil if the truth were visible before us. Let us study the example which the Blessed Virgin gives us of such a life—(1) *in her relations with others;* (2) in her *public practice of religion;* and (3) *in the affairs of everyday life.*

MEDITATION.

"*In fide vivo Filii Dei*"—*I live in the faith of the Son of God* (Gal. ii. 20).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the village of Nazareth, in which the greater part of the Blessed Virgin's life was passed.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to apply the principles of our faith in our daily life, in order that we may live by faith, following the example of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

I. The Practice of Faith in the Various Relations of Life.

I. We see the Blessed Virgin subject to Cæsar Augustus in the affairs of civil life, and to Joseph in her home. We see her showing a simple and unaffected kindness and consideration for her equals, notably at Hebron, where she went to visit her cousin, and at Cana, where the first miracle of Jesus was wrought at her intercession. Doubtless she showed the same simplicity in directing the childhood and youth of Jesus, who voluntarily accepted the authority with which she was invested. When from His Cross our Saviour chose St. John to replace Him, she acquiesced without a murmur, though her heart was breaking.

II. A living and practical faith will enable us to recognize God, His wisdom, His justice, and His goodness, in all the relations of inferiority, equality, or superiority in which we are placed by our station or circumstances. We shall submit ourselves entirely to His will, and shall find our

happiness in conformity to it, and shall show no repugnance to the persons with whom we are compelled to associate, neither boasting of success nor repining over disappointments. In this way all things will work together for our good, and we shall approach that ideal which Our Lord makes us pray for in the Our Father: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."

II. The Practice of Faith in Public Worship.

I. Mary complied scrupulously with all the requirements of the ceremonial law without seeking for exemption, even when they had a humiliating or painful side. She had seen Jesus submit to circumcision, and she in her turn submitted to the legal purification.

II. If our eyes could see God, if our ears could hear His voice inviting us to render to Him the homage prescribed or commanded by legitimate authority, how eagerly we should hasten to obey! Faith enables us to hear that voice in the orders of our lawful Superiors. Let us not set ourselves above the simple practices encouraged by the Church or by our Superiors. There is a certain amount of pride in refusing to adopt them. Let us show an exact regard of those rules of the Church which are sometimes neglected as being of no importance, and thus let us manifest the perfection and the readiness of our obedience. Let us conform ourselves to the spirit of the Church in the division of the seasons of the year and the observance of fasts and feasts. Let Lent be to us a time of penitence, and Easter of holy joy. Let us make

ourselves acquainted with the meaning of the festivals and ceremonies of the Church, that we may observe them with greater advantage to ourselves.

III. The Practice of Faith in Everyday Events.

I. God speaks to us by the incidents of our lives as well as by Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church. In both cases His word comes forth from infinite wisdom. It is intended for our good, and it deserves to be received with equal respect and love.

Mary was animated by such a faith in all the lesser as well as the greater events of her life, at Bethlehem as in Egypt, at Calvary as in the Cenacle. What strength she derived from it! what courage, what consolation!

II. 1. Let us endeavour to give ourselves up, as Mary did, to the guidance of Divine Providence. Let us not set up our earthly ideas in opposition to the will of God, and even when our plans are inspired by the best of motives, let us cheerfully leave the result in His hands.

2. In the events, whether of private or public life, we can sometimes see clearly the interposition of Providence, but at other times they are shrouded in a mystery which we cannot fathom. Let us, nevertheless, continue to adore the Divine wisdom without being in any way disquieted, and keep in our hearts the remembrance of those successes and failures through which we have gained the light of experience. Is it not perfect trust in God which led the Saints to perfection?

COLLOQUY.

Let us resolve to live henceforth such a life that, trusting in Mary's protection, we may be always able to say with the Apostle: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

Ave Maris Stella.

TWENTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Nature and Object of that Hope.

Plan of the Meditation.—It is good for us to remember nowadays, not only the pleasure, but also the duty, of hope. Our age, which is so bold in its doubts, is timid to excess in its hopes; or, to put it more plainly, it is just because men's faith is shaken that they give up hope. Let us follow the example of Mary, and establish ourselves firmly in the inexpugnable fortress of hope in God. We shall consider (1) the *nature and object of hope* in general; (2) the *object of the Blessed Virgin's hope;* and (3) the *object of our own hope.*

MEDITATION.

"*Non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum*—*No word shall be impossible with God* (St. Luke i. 37).

First Prelude.—Let us think of the house of Nazareth. The Angel Gabriel has delivered his message, and Mary consents to be the Mother of God.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may be profoundly impressed by the merit of hope, and may co-operate with grace by practising that precious virtue.

I. The Nature and Object of Hope in General.

I. 1. God has made us promises of infinite generosity, in which, since Adam's fall, we see also infinite mercy. These promises are known to us by faith. Based upon the faithfulness of God, hope leads us to expect from God eternal happiness and the means of attaining it, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

The *motive* of hope is a Divine attribute: God's inviolable faithfulness to His promises.

The principal *object* of our hope, that to which all else is subordinate, is the possession of God, which will constitute the essential happiness of eternity. Hope is a theological virtue, because God is its immediate cause and its object.

The *stability* of our hope is absolute on the side of God; we may fail in the conditions imposed upon us, but God will never fail to keep His promises. We shall understand the connection between faith and hope, if we remember that by hope we expect from God what faith teaches us He has promised. All the promises of God are concerned with eternal life, or the means, general and particular, of attaining it.

2. But the object of our hope is so sublime that in the natural order it is inaccessible. It is so impossible to obtain that object—namely, the possession of God Himself—that not only can we

not attain it by our own strength, but we cannot conceive how Divine omnipotence can raise us to such a height. Hence the *merit* of our hope.

(1) Hope is a profound homage rendered to the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God, by which we show our belief in these attributes of God to such an extent as to expect from Him what is, humanly speaking, impossible. In hoping, I say to God : " My God, the apparent impossibility of what I seek does not prevent me from asking, for Thy power is so great as to pass my understanding ; my own unworthiness does not restrain me, for Thou, in Thy merciful goodness and Thy desire to make me happy, dost condescend to forget my unworthiness. Thou hast the power and the will to give Thyself to me, and I know that Thou wilt do it, for Thy word can never fail. My motto is that of the Angel : ' Nothing is impossible with God.' "

(2) Hope is, again, a profound homage to the merits of Christ and the redemption He has obtained for us ; it is on these merits and this redemption that we base all our expectations ; we show our humility, because we expect nothing through any merit of our own.

3. To despair, on the contrary, is to refuse to make the effort demanded of us by God, or to declare the effort useless and vain. To refuse to make the effort ! What an insult to God to say that the possession of God is so poor a thing as not to be worth a little trouble ! To declare the effort useless, what an insult to the power or the faithfulness of God ! It is equivalent to

saying that He cannot raise us to Himself, or that He deceives us in promising to do so. How great is the sin of the man who ceases to hope!

II. Let us, then, recognize both the merit and the duty of hope, and let us thank God, the most loving of fathers, for having made a commandment of what should be our sweetest comfort.

II. The Object of the Hopes of the Mother of God.

I. Mary had, like all of us, to hope for the joys of the life to come. But besides the hope that we all have in common, Mary's hope included three things that seemed, humanly speaking, impossible of realization.

1. To understand the first, we must remember the deep feeling of personal lowliness which was always present in Mary. She, who was truly nothing in her own eyes, found herself chosen to be invested with a dignity the magnificence of which no one understood so fully as herself. How can we describe the hope which was able to bridge the distance between her and the Divine maternity? Such was the hope of Mary as she sang: "God hath regarded the humility of his handmaid" (St. Luke i. 48).

2. As a Virgin she received the promise that she should become a mother without any diminution of her perpetual virginity—another impossibility, as it seemed; yet hope reminded her that nothing was impossible with God.

3. Poor and humble as she was, she was told

to hope, not only for a place in Heaven, but for that which suited her dignity, the highest place of all. God called upon her to exercise virtue in such an eminent degree as to be carried, with His assistance, above the Seraphim. Impossible as it seemed, Mary accepted the task with confidence.

II. Let us endeavour to study and imitate the sublime hope of the humble handmaid of the Lord.

III. The Object of Our Hopes.

We, too, have to expect and to realize impossibilities.

I. The impossibility of *duty*. Whatever may be the obligations of our state of life, on the one hand, and our weakness and the difficulties arising from a long sloth on the other, we must firmly hope to accomplish our *duty*, counting on the help necessary, and never doubting the power of God's grace.

We must never shrink before the sublimity of our vocation : to have a perfect hope is to expect from God sanctity itself.

II. The impossibility of the *resurrection*. Let us remember how St. Paul's hearers mocked when he preached to them in the midst of Areopagus on the resurrection of the body (Acts xvii. 32). There was a sect of the Jews, called the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection ; and truly, when we look at the body of a person who has recently died, we are tempted to say that it is impossible. Can this inert mass, which has tottered feebly for a few languid years, and has now fallen without

power of motion, ever be again animated with life, immortal and full of glory ?

In spite of this we must hope for the resurrection. St. Paul tells us : " If the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable " (1 Cor. xv. 16, 17, 19).

III. The impossibility of *eternal glory*. How unlikely it seems that we, bound as we are to earth by all our thoughts and desires, should one day be found worthy of the glory and the happiness of God himself !

Once more we must strengthen our hope of the happiness to come, and go forward valiantly with the determination to attain it. Forward, in the name of God !

COLLOQUY.

St. Paul exhorts us : " Be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope " (1 Thess. iv. 12). To have no hope ! Can we imagine any greater calamnity ? And yet St. Paul tells us that such is the fate of those who do not believe. Let us pity them, and thank God, through Mary, for having given us hope, and made of it a commandment. Let us end our meditation with a fervent act of hope.

Salve, Regina ! spes nostra, salve !
Hail, Holy Queen ! hail, our hope !

TWENTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Beauty and Usefulness of that Hope.

Plan of the Meditation.—We shall consider in this meditation—(1) the *beauty* of hope; (2) its *usefulness;* (3) the *means of developing this virtue* in ourselves.

MEDITATION.

"*Benedictus Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui secundum misericordiam suam magnam regeneravit nos in spem vivam*"—*Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope* (1 St. Pet. i. 3).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves on Calvary, looking upon Mary, who stands at the foot of the Cross on which her Son is dying.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may understand the beauty and the value of hope, and that we may use all means in our power to develop it by the help of God in ourselves.

I. The Beauty of Hope.

I. Let us think of the simplicity and humility of Mary, and then of the greatness of her mission, the heroism of her resolution, the immensity of her sacrifices and her sufferings. She was not appalled by the greatness of her mission; time did not shake her resolution; suffering did not drive her to despair. What was the secret of her constancy? Her hope.

Hope is, indeed, the courage of our souls, which rises superior to every trial.

II. These thoughts should convince us of the inestimable value of this virtue. Hope encourages us to persevere in spite of failures ; hope gives us our final victory. To hope is to overcome our enemy instead of being vanquished and humbled by him. Let us be ashamed of our past want of confidence, and determined to acquire the virtue of the strong.

II. The Usefulness of Hope.

In the life of the Blessed Virgin there was nothing mean, nothing base, nothing impure. All her actions were ennobled by the elevation of the object towards which they were directed. This was the splendid fruit of her hope.

I. Hope *purifies*. The expectation of real blessings in the future draws away our thoughts from the false pleasures of the present. What man, who looks forward with confidence to eternal happiness, can be tempted by the allurements of a transient gratification of the senses ? Hope is the great antidote to sin.

II. Hope *incites us to action*. All the labour of the sower is inspired by his expectation of the harvest. It is hope which animates all great undertakings.

III. Hope *gives us courage*, and removes that miserable timidity which takes away half the energy of men's acts. Hope is the boldness of the good.

III. The Means of acquiring and increasing Our Hope.

1. Hope is a gift of God, as well as a virtue. We must, then, ask it of God, and co-operate with the grace that prepares us for it. In what does this preparation consist?

1. Let us answer one very common and natural objection. God can never fail to keep His promises, but our hope may be frustrated by our own fault. I have always reasons for doubting myself, and is not this well-grounded apprehension enough to destroy the magnificent fabric of my expectations?

Even this thought should not weaken my hope if I put my infirmity under the protection of God's providence. God, who has promised, knows all my weakness, and would it not be a vain promise if my own frailty were an obstacle to the attainment of the object hoped for? God calls me, weak and inconstant as I am, and I may be sure that His call will have its due effect, if I am humble and obedient, and do not refuse to trust Him. Hope, like faith, implies a complete abandonment to Divine providence. *Spes non confundit*—Hope confoundeth not (Rom. v. 5).

2. Let us make use of the means which God has placed within our reach. (1) *The exercise of faith:* A practical faith puts the blessings of the future more clearly before our eyes, and so makes it easier for us to hope for them. (2) *Purity of life:* When we turn our eyes away from the earth, we lift them to Heaven. *Ubi enim thesaurus vester est, ibi etc or vestrum erit*—Where your treasure

is, there will your heart be also (St. Luke xii. 34). (3) *The practice of good works:* That makes it easier for us to keep in the path of virtue. (4) *Meditation on the goodness of God and the mysteries of religion:* This goodness and these mysteries contain the pledge of the happiness we hope for. (5) The *heavenly light* which prayer will obtain for us on the virtue of hope.

II. We have sometimes reproached ourselves that our hope was so weak. But have we done anything to animate and strengthen it, or have we indolently waited for it to come to us? Let us once for all put off this enervating sloth.

COLLOQUY.

Let us reflect on the words of Holy Scripture, *spe gaudentes*—rejoicing in hope (Rom. xii. 12). All other joys are vain; this alone is real rejoicing. Let us fly for refuge to the protection of our God and Father, casting all our care on Him, for He hath care of us (1 St. Pet. v. 7). Let us beg the intercession of Mary, that we may do this with faith and hope.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-FOURTH SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Trials of that Hope.

Plan of the Meditation.—Nothing is so essential to our perseverance as a knowledge of the difficulties which lie before us, and of the means to overcome them; we shall therefore devote this

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

meditation to the trials of hope, and consider—(1) the *purpose of these trials;* (2) the *trials of hope in the life of the Blessed Virgin;* and (3) the same *trials in our own life.*

MEDITATION.

"Induti loricam fidei et caritatis, et galeam, spem salutis, quoniam non posuit nos Deus in iram, sed in acquisitionem salutis per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum"—Having on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but unto the purchasing of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. v. 8, 9).

First Prelude.—Let us think of Mary at the foot of the Cross.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask the grace to pass safely through the trials of our hope.

I. The Trials of Hope: their Purpose.

I. God is pleased sometimes to try the hope of those who are dear to Him. The life of Abraham, as related in Holy Scripture, gives us a remarkable example of such Divine dealings. God promised him descendants, numberless as the stars of Heaven, through his son Isaac, and afterwards ordered him to sacrifice the heir of these promises. At the moment when the patriarch raised his sword to sacrifice his son, did he not seem to be frustrating with his own hand the hope he had so long felt in his heart?

How often in the lives of the Saints we have seen their most cherished projects threatened by

opposition, till there seemed no hope of their fulfilment! They, too, were sometimes obliged to give the death-blow to some work which they thought they were carrying through to the glory of God.

II. What is the purpose of such trials? God permits nothing that does not tend to His own glory or our sanctification: how admirable, how glorious, was the hope of that man of whom it could be said that "against hope he believed in hope"! (Rom. iv. 18). The foundation of true hope is faith. When everything seems to smile on our undertakings, and promise a successful result, what do we trust to—these favourable appearances, or the promise of God? All creatures come from God; they exist only by His favour; but we often lose sight of this fact, and we rely on the creature, while we profess to trust only in the Creator. But when, humanly speaking, all our prospects are at their darkest, that is the time to test the reality of our hope. If it remains firm at such a time as that, what a spectacle it is to Angels and to men! If we relax our efforts to bring our work to a successful conclusion, we show that we have lost our hope; if, instead of being discouraged by disappointment, we start afresh with renewed vigour, we shall not be defeated in the end.

II. The Trials of Hope in the Life of the Blessed Virgin.

I. 1. Mary was made familiar, by a careful reading of Holy Scripture, with the splendid future promised to the people of Israel. But what a contrast was there between the prophecy and the

reality! The sceptre was not to be taken away from Juda until Messias should come, and this kingdom, already subject to the Romans, was on the point of coming to an end, while there was nothing to suggest a restoration of its former glory. Everything announced ruin and decadence where everything should have been glory and regeneration.

2. Her Divine Son was born to be the Saviour of the whole world, and she saw how He met with contradiction and incredulity even in His own family; His earthly career, illuminated by the brilliancy of temporary success, ended in what seemed final failure by his death on the Cross. Let us consider here the Passion and Crucifixion of our Saviour, forgetting for the moment the triumph which followed. In order to appreciate the constancy of Mary's hope, let us recall those days and hours of anguish, each more terrible than those which had preceded it, when she realized the hatred of the priests, the cowardice of the disciples, and the contempt of the whole people. They who gave up hope seemed to be justified. Abraham did not see his dear son die; but before Mary's eyes the veil of death descended upon Jesus, and, as it seemed, over His mission also. Let us remember, too, that all the agony which her affection made her suffer increased the temptation to despair.

II. Let us measure Mary's hope by the greatness of her sorrows, and it will appear to us worthy of our highest admiration. Let us offer to Mary our tribute of reverence and love, and to God our deepest gratitude.

III. The Trials of Hope in Our Own Life.

I. Our trials are *public* and *private.*

1. *Public Trials.*—We represent a cause which is destined to triumph in the end. But what are its prospects in the future if we judge by present circumstances? The surrounding atmosphere is anti-Christian. Courage and vigour are at the service of irreligion, while timidity and hesitation appear to be the characteristics of the followers of Christ and the defenders of the Church. We hear of frequent defections, even in the ranks of the clergy. Official apostasy seems to be an accomplished fact, and how many persons think they hear the death-knell of our faith! Our bearing is not that of conquerors, but of defeated men who lose ground and retreat.

2. *Private Trials.*—How many reasons we have to be discouraged! While hope is concerned with things distant and invisible, we are constantly assailed by the temptations of present pleasures, and their power to draw us away from the path of duty is increased by the example of so many men who allow themselves to be led astray. Then come our own failures, and imperfections, and actual sins, and we feel inclined to give up the struggle in weariness and despair. Is Christian virtue possible for us? What shall we say of perfection? Who are we, that we should ever expect to attain it?

II. Yet God has told us to hope for virtue, and even for perfection; and if we hope, we shall attain our end. Let us repeat the maxim, *Spes non confundit*—Hope confoundeth not. God tells us to

remember the day when the just shall be called to possess the kingdom, and the wicked shall be commanded to depart into everlasting punishment. By meditating on the judgment to come we shall keep the virtue of hope alive within us.

COLLOQUY.

Our own dearest interests are at stake. Let us ask Mary at the foot of the Cross to give us some share of her invincible hope.

Salve, Regina ! spes nostra, salve !
Hail, Holy Queen ! hail, our hope !

TWENTY-FIFTH SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Three Temptations against Hope.

Plan of the Meditation.—The strengthening of our hope is a result so important to the whole of our life that it will be well to devote particular attention to three special difficulties which obstruct our progress in the royal way of Christian hope. We shall consider first—(1) the temptation of *desolation;* (2) that of *sensuality;* (3) that which arises from the *feeling of our own weakness.*

MEDITATION.

" In quo exsultabitis, modicum nunc si oportet contristari in variis tentationibus "—Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little

time made sorrowful in divers temptations (1 St. Pet. i. 6).

First Prelude.—Let us transport ourselves in thought to the dwelling in which Mary, accompanied by St. John, passed the sad hours which intervened between the death of Jesus and His resurrection.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray earnestly that we may possess a hope which shall withstand all the trials of our present life.

I. The Temptation of Desolation.

I. *The Trial Itself.*—In the world and in the cloister it often happens that our feeling and taste for piety seem impaired or deadened. God and the things of Heaven do not speak to our hearts. If we try to pray, we succeed only in stammering out certain formal prayers which sound like a lie on the lips that utter them ; if we give up vocal prayer, a deadly lethargy creeps through all our senses. Even after Holy Communion and on feast-days, when we might expect some sensible devotion, we remain cold and dry. How different from the beautiful days of the past ! Then God came to us of Himself, now we seek Him in vain ; then He spoke sweetly to our hearts, now our prayers remain unanswered ; then we seemed to realize His presence, now we seem utterly forsaken ; then it was springtime, now it is dismal winter.

This condition may be produced by various causes.

1. Our methods are wrong. While all around us and in us changes and moves onward, are not

our exercises of piety too literally copied from those we followed at the outset of our career? We do not speak or act as we did in infancy, in childhood, and in youth; and yet we pray in the same old fashion, following the same monotonous routine. Our programme is always the same, our execution never varies. Content with our efforts in the past, we hope to live for ever on the little capital we began with, without making any effort to increase it. If we meditate, the same scenes suggest the same reflections, which formerly perhaps pleased us by their novelty, but which, now that they have lost their freshness, are vapid and savourless. Custom dulls everything—not only grief, but also pleasure and satisfaction.

2. Spiritual dryness is sometimes caused by a want of generosity. Formerly we were recollected, now we have become worldly; formerly we mortified ourselves, now we are too fond of our ease; formerly we sought God, now we seek only ourselves. Let us never forget that sacrifice is the salt of the spiritual life. If we work more for God, we shall find it easier to enter into communion with Him.

3. A third cause of spiritual dryness is the negligence with which we enter upon our exercises, the carelessness of our preparation. We are afraid of trouble.

4. This state of apathy, which may be a natural result of monotony, is also a trial providentially sent with a view to our spiritual welfare. If, as we advance in age, we are less easily affected by external causes, it is not strange that we should feel a diminution of our sensible ardour for things

which are outside the natural sphere of our activity. But when the sensible help is withdrawn, it leaves room for what should be the true foundation of all —a faith which lives without seeing or feeling. It is a virtue which is laborious and difficult of attainment, but how much more pure and meritorious! Beneath the frozen earth which covers it God sees the germination of the seed, and the development of the young plant which will soon arise from the soil in its fresh robe of green. So His eye watches the hidden labour which transforms a soul, and prepares it under the cold obscurity of desolation for the warmth and brightness of the eternal vision.

When we are in a state of dryness, we must carefully examine ourselves to discover the causes of our desolation, in order to remove any fault of our own which may have contributed to it. Consolation is a help of which we need not deprive ourselves. While we are bound to accept with patience and resignation the dryness and desolation which God permits, we should not seek for them any more than for any other kind of temptations.

II. *This Trial in Mary.*—1. Nothing has been revealed to us of the interior consolations of the Blessed Virgin. We know, however, that in her desolation could be nothing but a trial of her virtue. Certain situations of her life suggest themselves as the perfect exterior type of desolation. Let us think of the three days which elapsed between the loss of Jesus and the moment when He was found again in the Temple; of all the years that she passed without Jesus, and as if ignored

by Him ; and of all the years that she survived after His ascension.

Let us try to comprehend the immensity of the sacrifices that she made in these circumstances. But how can we realize it ? It needs a mother's heart to understand the joy that a mother would feel in the company of a dearly-loved son, and the anguish she would suffer in a long separation from him. And how much greater was the anguish of the heart of Mary, separated from Jesus !

2. But through all these trials the faith and hope of Mary never wavered. Let us admire and imitate her courage.

III. *The Trial of Desolation in Our Own Lives.*— The trial of desolation is a precious epoch in our lives, for it gives us the opportunity of acquiring various merits : The merit of *humility*, if we submit to the trial without irritation or resentment ; the merit of *patience*, if we go on in the path of duty, unshaken by opposition, and unwearied by monotony ; the merit of *hope* itself. Violent assaults sometimes surprise a man who does not feel his former energy within him, and it is natural in times of desolation to see everything in the darkest colours, to look forward to continual struggles and insurmountable difficulties. But without taking the trouble to dissipate the clouds above me, I will still cling to hope. Whatever be the fury of the storm, however great be the number, the power, and the malice of my enemies, I will yet say : *Si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum*—If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear (Ps. xxvi. 3). And I have confidence that one day I

shall add: *Domine, eduxisti ab inferno animam meam: salvasti me a descendentibus in lacum*— Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, my soul from hell: Thou hast saved me from them that go down into the pit (Ps. xxix. 4).

Even before desolation comes, let us be careful not to attach too much importance to our feelings or merely temporary consolations.

II. The Temptation of Sensuality.

I. Very different from the trial of desolation is the temptation of sensuality. The former is sad and gloomy, taking no interest in anything, and having no fixed purpose; the latter is gay and smiling, and offers us an attractive object for our acceptance. The former dissuades us from loving anything; the latter persuades us to be passionately attached to some present and palpable enjoyment. How dangerous are the attractions which turn our eyes away from the prospect of the future! What mischief has been caused all around us by these fatal charms! How many men have been ruined by giving way to them! And even among those who conduct themselves well, how much future joy has been sacrificed to the pursuit of present pleasure!

II. Mary had not to fear any interior sensual temptations, but in her virginal purity she gives us an example of perfect victory over the senses.

Let us admire the sublimity of her aims, and recognize the reality of her happiness.

III. The temptation of sensuality is always at our gates, awaiting the moment when we may

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

succumb to it. Let us arm ourselves against it—(1) by prayer ; (2) by meditation—let us be persuaded that the present pleasure which is offered us is but vanity, and that the realization of our hopes is not far distant ; (3) by the willingness with which we make the sacrifice that we have deliberately offered, according to the duties of our state of life ; (4) by the habit of renunciation and self-denial.

III. The Conviction of Our Own Weakness.

I. A false humility may do us a deadly injury. The consideration of our own weakness, which is in other respects so useful, may have the effect of depressing and discouraging us. There is no need that the disproportion between what we are and what God invites us to hope for should drive us to despair. When this temptation assails us, let us think of the infinite power of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, and, following the example of St. Ignatius Loyola, let us put away every thought that should prevent us from having complete confidence in God.

Let us examine ourselves, and see whether we have ever given way to any temptation of distrust, and let us often repeat the prayer of St. Ignatius : "Lord, give me humility, but a humility which will permit me to love Thee."

II. Mary, whose life was full of sorrows, saw so clearly her own insignificance that the very thought of it would have filled her with desolation if she had not been sustained by the strength of her hope.

III. What is our remedy? What will keep us from yielding to temptation, or raise us again if we fall? Prayer, continual fervent prayer. Then we must remember that God, who has made us such magnificent promises, knows our frailty. Our confidence rests, not on our own weakness, but on His strength. It is a special glory for God that He has done so much for us who are worth so little.

COLLOQUY.

Let us earnestly ask Mary's intercession, that our hope may overcome all obstacles, and may never grow faint.

Salve, Regina! spes nostra, salve!
Hail, Holy Queen! hail, our hope!

TWENTY-SIXTH SATURDAY: THE HOPE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Fruits of that Hope.

Plan of the Meditation.—Hope fills our present life with *confidence*, and *secures for us the blessings* that we look for in the future. The thought of these two advantages should, by the grace of God, help to strengthen our hope beyond any danger of wavering. We shall first consider these two points, and, for the third point, the *fruits of hope in the Blessed Virgin.*

MEDITATION.

"*Spes non confundit*"—*Hope confoundeth not* (Rom. v. 5).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the room in which the guests were assembled for the marriage feast at Cana.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that, through the mercy of God and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, we may reap the magnificent fruits of Christian hope.

I. Confidence.

I. *The Value of Confidence.*—1. Let us picture to ourselves a sick man, suffering from a painful and dangerous disease. A physician of high reputation is brought to visit him, who, after careful examination, declares that the disease is curable, and that in time the patient may be completely restored to health. The poor man at once recovers his courage with the assurance that the struggle against his disease will not be in vain. The light he sees before him has changed the aspect of things entirely. The joy he feels on hearing of the probability of his recovery enables him to bear his pain with patience and resignation. This change is the work of *confidence*, and the confidence which rests on God is the eldest daughter of hope. It is, indeed, the peaceful certitude of increased hope.

2. This sick man represents mankind in general, and every man in particular, whose infirmity affects his will, his passions, his desires, as well as his body. Jesus is the Physician who announces the end of his sufferings. Happy is the man who allows himself to be persuaded! His whole life and personality are changed. He is determined to fight and to conquer; he recovers courage to bear pain and

trouble ; he is calm and confident in all the dangers that threaten him.

Confidence gives us the peace which surpasseth all understanding, and leads us on to the exercise of the most heroic virtue. Let us remember the bond which unites confidence and holiness. Without confidence, how can we display that generous activity, how accomplish those continual acts of renunciation, which holiness requires ? And the blessings promised by faith are so great, so far surpassing all the blessings of this life, that if confidence shows them to us within our reach, we shall spare no pains to make sure of possessing them.

II. Let us make ourselves happy in the possession of confidence, and resolutely shun that pessimism which has neither joy in the present nor hope for the future. There is much more nobility and generosity in facing life and its duties with a smile than in quarrelling with our neighbours and our surroundings.

Let us endeavour also to inspire confidence in others. To do this is to increase the number of happy men in the world.

At the same time, let us bear this truth in mind —the first step in virtue is painful, progress and development of the virtue bring happiness. How foolish are those who aim only at being half holy ! They are like men wandering in a forest, who never find their way to the open ground. In the spiritual warfare they can but struggle weakly without ever striking a decisive blow to put the enemy to flight.

II. The Eternal Fruit.

I. Hope has for its proper object eternal beatitude. What nobler object could it aim at? Let hope give me God and the happiness of Heaven. Is there anything to desire or dream of beyond this? If I reach Heaven, shall I not have reached the object of all my hope?

Hope realizes its object. Does not the Apostle say this clearly? "Hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). Again, the Scripture says: "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him" (Ps. xc. 14). To hope is to hold God pledged to the fulfilment of His promises, and He can never fail us.

Take away man's hope. By what mysterious, unknown way can he ever attain to the joys of Heaven?

II. Let us realize the utter misery caused by despair, and the eternal treasure held out to him who hopes. Can we hesitate which path to follow?

III. The Fruits of Hope in Mary.

To what wonderful confidence Mary was brought by her hope, and how happily it put her in possession of the blessings hoped for!

I. *Confidence.*—The confidence of Mary was displayed in the trials and afflictions of her life, in the midst of which her heart was always calm and untroubled.

1. She had confidence that her virginity would

suffer no detriment from her union with St. Joseph. A similar confidence should animate us in the dangers which we necessarily incur in the service of God. But we must not confound these inevitable dangers with those into which we run of our own free will, the perils we accept for the sake of God with those into which we are led by our own passions or our own cowardice.

2. Mary had confidence that God would clear away the painful doubt which tormented the soul of Joseph in that hour of anxiety in which he could not account for the pregnancy of his chaste spouse. So we may find ourselves the objects of unmerited suspicions, from which even the Saints did not always escape. Let us have confidence that God will know how to safeguard His own glory and our reputation.

3. Mary, in the flight into Egypt, gives us an example of confidence that we should imitate in the open persecutions of which the Church or we ourselves may be the object.

4. Mary had confidence at the marriage feast at Cana, in spite of the apparent refusal of Jesus to grant her request for a miracle. Confidence manifests itself most clearly in continual fervent prayer.

II. *The Object of Hope.*—It is enough to contemplate this glorious Queen near the throne of her Divine Son. Does she not possess all that she hoped for on Calvary?

Let us in our turn take our stand on the Calvary of our trials and difficulties, having confidence that we shall obtain all we hope for.

COLLOQUY.

As we think of the nature of hope, its trials, its fruits and consolations, and, on the other hand, of the temptations to despair, let us thank Mary for being such a model of hope to us, and for helping us to acquire that virtue. Let us ask forgiveness for our doubts, and, acknowledging that our want of hope has been due to pride and self-love, let us offer to Mary, and through her to Jesus, a life founded on complete trust in God.

Salve, Regina! spes nostra, salve!
Hail, Holy Queen! hail, our hope!

TWENTY-SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Excellence of that Charity.

Plan of the Meditation.—As our reverence for the Mother of fair love increases, so also should our devotion to charity itself. This Queen of virtues makes us love God for Himself, and our neighbour for God's sake. In the meditations that follow we shall consider charity as the love of God and the love of men. The present meditation is intended to impress upon us the excellence of the love of God, and its three points will be—(1) the *charity of the Mother of God;* (2) the *excellence of charity;* (3) the *obligation which it imposes* upon us to avoid sin, and to make good use of the Sacraments.

MEDITATION.

"*Nuntietis ei quia amore langueo*"—*Tell Him that I languish with love* (Cant. v. 8).

First Prelude.—Let us contemplate Mary as a Queen of surpassing beauty, placed in the glory of Paradise near the throne of her beloved Son.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for the grace to understand the value and the excellence of charity.

I. The Charity of the Mother of God.

I. 1. In times past, led astray by specious objections, theologians have ventured to call in question the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Heretics have denied her perpetual virginity, but no one who professed to honour Jesus Christ has ever questioned the charity of the Mother of our Redeemer. It might be possible to conceive that her sanctification did not coincide with the first moment of her existence, or that her virginal integrity was lost in her maternity, but it is impossible to doubt that the soul of the Mother of God was enriched with the pure gold of charity.

2. And to what degree of perfection? To the point of surpassing the charity of all the Saints and blessed spirits. This is proclaimed with one voice by all the doctors of the East and the West alike.

II. Whether we think of her in her virginity at Nazareth, in her maternity at Bethlehem, in her flight into Egypt, or in any other of the joyful or sorrowful scenes of her life, we must always think of her as burning with the fire of charity, which increased till the moment when her mortal body was either unable any longer to retain her soul, or

was carried with it to the highest place in Heaven. Let us fix our thoughts on the perfection of this sublime virtue in our dear Mother. Let us worthily praise and congratulate her.

II. The Excellence of Charity.

I. Charity is the most sublime of all virtues. Let us endeavour to explain why it deserves this title.

1. Charity is a friendship between God and man. This expression sums up everything. It has been said that in other religions God is feared and invoked by men, but the religion revealed by God Himself is the only one that has formulated the command to love Him, and only Christ has inculcated this precept of love. Does this mean that human intelligence would be unable to discover the amiable perfections of God, or that our hearts could fail to be touched by the many and great benefits He has conferred upon us? By no means. The infinite goodness of God calls forth the lively gratitude of every reasonable man. But to dare to unite ourselves with God by love, to conceive that sentiment of friendship which makes us live in God, and God in us, we need a bridge cast over the awful abyss which separates us from Him. God only can bridge that abyss. He only, in the counsels of His wisdom, can find means to help us to come to Him, to enable our hearts to say with sincerity: "My God, I love Thee with my whole heart, and above all things, because Thou art infinitely good and perfect," This is the act of charity.

2. Charity is the perfection of all the supernatural virtues. Without charity the others are nothing. What is the function of faith and hope? To lead us to charity.

3. Charity is a sentiment which we share with God, and which characterizes the Divine Will. "God is charity," says St. John, "and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him" (1 St. John iv. 16). How sublime that virtue, which, according to the Apostle, is the essential quality of God!

4. Charity never falleth away. We love on earth, and we shall love in Heaven. Faith will cease, for we shall see; hope will come to an end, for we shall enjoy; but we shall never cease to love. By charity we begin on earth the life we shall live in Heaven.

5. God is charity; therefore, it is charity which gives man his value in the sight of God. Vain are rank and wealth, vain are talents and success. God passes by these as of no account. But charity is not vain. Tell me, O man, how lovest thou? Thy place in Heaven depends on the answer.

6. There have been some noble minds which have identified charity with the Holy Spirit Himself, as if so sublime a sentiment could not have been created.

II. After having meditated on the excellence of charity, let us remember this truth—that it is God who invites us to love Him. How can we be sufficiently grateful for His condescension?

III. Two Practical Conclusions.

Are we not necessarily led by a contemplation of this Divine virtue to draw two practical conclusions ?

I. A mortal sin extinguishes charity, destroys that magnificent work of the goodness of God. Can we ever hate sin enough ?

We are led into sin by *self-interest,* by *passion,* and by *pride.* What interest is comparable to that of charity ? How can we purchase the gratification of our passions at such a price as to sacrifice for it the virtue of charity ? And what is the lot of the proud man ? Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled.

II. We can know charity by the care we take in the reception of the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. How little the trouble, how great the reward ! Let us examine ourselves as to our preparation, and make it better, that we may draw down upon ourselves a more plentiful supply of Divine graces. Who would hesitate to take all the trouble necessary to increase his store of earthly treasures ? And are not the treasures of grace infinitely more precious ?

COLLOQUY.

Let us show our gratitude by humble repentance, and firm resolutions to do better in future, and let us offer our resolutions to God through Mary and her dear Son Jesus.

Our Father. Hail, Mary.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Touchstone of Charity.

Plan of the Meditation.—We recognize the duty of loving our Father who is in Heaven. It is easy to persuade ourselves that we love God, but in order to prevent the possibility of self-deceit Our Lord has given us means to discover whether our love is genuine. Let us profit by His teaching, and use this meditation to test the reality of our love. We shall consider—(1) the *sign demanded by Jesus;* (2) *Mary's possession* of it; and (3) the *act of love contained in the Our Father.*

MEDITATION.

"Qui habet mandata mea et servat ea, ille est qui diligit me"—He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me (St. John xiv. 21).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Our Lord, surrounded by His disciples, addressing to them the words quoted above.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for the grace to love God sincerely.

I. The Sign of True Love.

I. 1. The thought of the majesty and goodness of God, and the magnificence of all His works, may well excite in our hearts a sentiment of admiration, and an emotion which we may take for love. But Our Lord bids us not to be deceived. He

seeks for the true proof of our love in our actions. If these are conformed to the law of God, there, He says, is the sure sign of love.

2. What sublime truth there is in this teaching ! Love resides in the will. It is a sentiment, but this sentiment leads us to desire the good of those we love, and the intensity of this desire measures the reality of our love. How do we judge of human affections ? Not by tears and words, but by acts, and especially by acts which involve effort and sacrifice. The love which does nothing, and will not take any trouble, is a poor thing ; but how real and generous is the love which shows itself in self-denial and self-sacrifice !

We cannot procure for God any good which adds to His perfection and happiness. We can only increase His exterior glory, and this glory consists in the fulfilment of His will. What, then, is the desire of this loving Father ? To obtain from free creatures that perfect obedience which is His due.

It is, therefore, the keeping of God's commandments that proves the reality of our love.

3. This first reason is more than enough, but there is a still stronger one. We do not love God by our own power, but under the influence of Divine grace, and by the infused virtue of charity ; therefore, a mortal sin, by extinguishing charity, takes away our means of loving God. We need not flatter or console ourselves by thinking that we love Him at least a little. We no longer love Him at all.

Love establishes a union between those who love. How can we be brought near to God, except by the fulfilment of His will ?

4. There are degrees of perfection in this love. Do you wish to glorify God by avoiding everything that can offend Him in the slightest measure? Then you love Him more than if you were content with keeping clear of mortal sin. But the highest degree is to seek God's good pleasure in all things, in order to make that our constant rule of conduct.

II. There are some who talk of their love of God at the very moment when they are committing sin. They must be utterly blind. But without going so far as that, have not we sometimes deceived ourselves? Let us remember for the future what is the true test of love.

II. The Sign of Love in the Mother of God.

I. The Queen and Mother of fair love is our perfect model of this virtue. In her was neither mortal sin nor even venial fault, but a will seeking always and in all things to please God. *Ecce ancilla Domini!*—Behold the handmaid of the Lord! These words sum up the whole of her life. Was there question of her becoming the Mother of God? *Behold His handmaid!* Was there question of sacrificing her Son upon the Cross? *Behold His handmaid!* Was there question, after the Resurrection of Jesus, of her waiting for long weary years the hour of her reunion with her Saviour and her God? *Behold the handmaid of the Lord!*

II. Let us endeavour to realize the perfection of this obedience, and the great courage it required.

III. The Act of Love in the Our Father.

I. Our Blessed Lord has taught us the Our Father, that most sublime of all prayers. We say it every day. But have we ever thought that it contains a perfect act of love? *Fiat voluntas tua!* —Thy will be done! That is the prayer of perfect love.

II. Let us fervently offer this petition every time we recite the Our Father, and let us not refuse to God the love He asks of us. The will of God is most high, most holy, most adorable. The most beautiful spectacle in the world is the unity of will between the Creator and the creature. How can we hesitate to give God this proof of our love? How can we help loving every law of God, when we think that such is His will, and that to fulfil His law is to offer Him the only thing that He can accept from us?

COLLOQUY.

Let us repent of our failings in the past, and with the aid of our dear Mother, say from the bottom of our hearts: "O my God, Thy will be done."

Our Father. Hail, Mary.

TWENTY-NINTH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD TOWARDS MEN.

The Extent of that Charity.

Plan of the Meditation.—The purpose of this meditation is to exalt the beauty and excellence of charity, which are so often disparaged and

misunderstood. We shall learn to resist the materialistic spirit which nowadays leads men to prefer the works of Nature to those of Grace. Is it not in this spirit that human and earthly affections are extolled to the prejudice of the love of charity? In order that we may form a high idea of charity towards men, we shall consider first *the vast extent of that charity*, and then see how *it was realized in Mary*, and, lastly, how *it may be realized in ourselves*.

MEDITATION.

"*Scire supereminentem scientiæ caritatem Christi, ut impleamini in omnem plenitudinem Dei*"—*To know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God* (Eph. iii. 19).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Our Lord, surrounded by His Apostles, when, in answer to the question of one of the Pharisees, a doctor of the law, He expounded the great commandment of charity.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may be so filled with the spirit of Divine charity, that we shall look upon all human affections as of little account in comparison with it.

I. The Qualities of Fraternal Charity.

I. 1. Let us put away, once for all, that false idea of charity which causes that virtue to be maligned and contemned. Too often charity is represented as a mere pretence of love, in whose

name certain fixed duties are carried out in a perfunctory and half-hearted manner, without the slightest interest in the persons to whom the benefit is done, as if charity were love without freshness, and vigour, and life, and only passionate love possessed any charm, or warmth, or colour. Do not the tears of Jesus, model of Divine charity, and after Him the joys and sorrows of the Saints, protest against this distortion of the most beautiful of all virtues ?

2. Listen to the great Apostle of charity, St. Paul. How eloquently he speaks of the necessity, the excellence, the endurance of charity in his first Epistle to the Corinthians ! And what he says in another Epistle (Eph. iii. 18) of the charity of Christ, and the great work of that charity, the Redemption of mankind, we need not hesitate to repeat of the charity with which Our Lord embraces His disciples. Let us try to comprehend, with all the Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth of charity.

The *height* of that charity ! Rise, rise to the heights of Heaven, to the heart of God Himself ; there is the source, there is the object of that feeling of love in which we share, and which is communicated by God, living in Him, and through Him, and for Him.

The *breadth* of charity. God, like a loving Father, extends His love to all His reasonable creatures, except those who have lost His favour, and incurred His wrath by mortal sin. That is the breadth of charity, which finds an object in all reasonable creatures, all made for the possession of God. It embraces all men living, those of the

past whom it has never known, and those of future time ; the souls in purgatory as well as those still on earth ; friends and enemies ; it is a love which knows no limits.

The *depth* of charity ! It wishes the greatest happiness to all, and is ready to make any sacrifice to obtain it for them. St. Paul says : " I wished myself to be anathema from Christ, for my brethren."

The *length* of charity ! Eternal in God, without beginning and without end, charity endures through all the life of men ; endures for all, in spite of coldness and ingratitude, through all eternity.

II. What a noble object for our admiration ! Nothing can be more sublime than to love our neighbour with the love of charity ; it is the best use we can make of our life.

II. The Qualities of that Charity in Mary.

I. Derived from God, and having God as its ultimate object, like all true charity, but derived more abundantly and producing richer fruit, the charity of Mary extends to all mankind, as to so many spiritual children, and to all the blessed Spirits, over whom Mary reigns as a gracious and benevolent Queen. It is so profound that it makes Mary the Queen of Martyrs, offering up, for the whole of mankind more than herself, her Son and her God. It is everlasting: the brutality of her son's murderers could not kill it, nor the sin of men, who can always, if they will, find a refuge under her protection. Numberless

striking conversions, which are evidently due to the intercession of this loving Mother, bear witness to the charity of Mary.

II. In all our trials and sorrows let us never forget that Mary in Heaven loves us with a motherly affection which can never fail. We need only a humble confidence in order to feel the happy effects of that charity.

III. The Qualities of Our Charity.

I. Let us examine our own love of our neighbour and see within what narrow limits we have confined it.

In its *height*, have we not put out of sight the Divine origin and object of charity for less worthy motives ?

In its *breadth*, it is limited by considerations of community of country and language, of habits and inclinations.

In its *length*, how quickly our love of men is wearied by apparent failure, weakened by separation, or killed by ingratitude !

These are not the marks of real charity.

II. What should our love of men be ?

The principle of all our actions is the intelligence and the will.

We must cleanse them from everything that is contrary to charity ; we must banish from our intelligence all unkind, proud, envious thoughts, and replace them by generous and humble thoughts, being ready to put others above ourselves ; from our will all malice and enmity, replacing it by sympathy and loving-kindness ; from our conversa-

tion all words likely to wound others, or to cause discord or dissension between them; from our actions everything which may injure or annoy, being always ready to help and benefit others, and give them the first place.

That is real charity, and if we carry out this plan, we cannot fail to produce good results. But let us remember that many will neither understand nor imitate us; we shall never succeed unless we follow the example of Jesus and Mary, without caring what other men think of us, or how little that example is followed in the world.

COLLOQUY.

Let us earnestly pray the Mother of Fair Love to raise up our hearts, and fill them with real charity.

Ave Maria.

THIRTIETH SATURDAY: THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Charity victorious over Selfishness.

Plan of the Meditation.—Let us first see what selfishness is, in order that we may overcome it by following the example of Mary. We shall consider—(1) the *nature of selfishness;* (2) the *Blessed Virgin's victory over selfishness;* (3) the *way in which we shall overcome it.*

MEDITATION.

"Omnes quæ sua sunt quærunt, non quæ sunt Jesu Christi"—All seek the things that are their own: not the things that are Jesus Christ's (Phil. ii. 21).

First Prelude.—Let us represent to ourselves Our Lord Jesus Christ after His Last Supper delivering His last discourse to His disciples, and commanding them to love one another.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for grace to overcome selfishness, following the example of Jesus and Mary.

I. The Nature of Selfishness.

I. 1. We must love ourselves, and we must not be selfish : how can these two precepts be reconciled ? What sort of love does God wish us to have for ourselves ? and what is that love of ourselves which is condemned under the name of selfishness ?

The vicious love of self shows itself by bringing us into enmity with God and man. According to its degree, it diminishes or kills charity, which unites men to God and to one another.

We are created by God, and we live to do Him honour with all the faculties we possess. We owe to God, therefore, that grateful affection that a Son owes to his father. By the grace of God we have been born members of the great human family ; we are bound, therefore, to recognize all men as our brethren. The selfish man in the home is the son who has no place in his heart for his father and his brothers ; the selfish man in the house of God and the great human family is the man who loves himself as separate from God or his fellow-men ; who seeks his own good and his own pleasure without thinking of others.

This separation from God, this want of consideration for others, may be more or less complete

according to the intensity of the selfishness. There is no mistaking the selfishness of the man who has no regard for anyone but himself; but there is another kind of selfishness which disguises itself under the name of love of family or country, but which is really opposed to true charity.

2. (*a*) Charity does not ignore the *legitimate emotions* of men; it may exist equally well in a person of a cold and reserved nature or in one of a more demonstrative temperament, and, without changing the characteristics of either, may make the natural good qualities of each contribute to its accidental perfection. But love which proceeds from any other motive than charity has something selfish in it—as, for instance, when we seek the pleasure of intimate familiar intercourse with persons of the same tastes as ourselves, or strive for the first place in the friendship of those we love. All this is innocent enough, but it is not perfect charity, which gives itself freely without expecting anything in return.

(*b*) Charity does not ignore the claims of relationship, but measures its affection by the various claims which are made upon it; thus it sanctions the love of parents and children, and of married persons for one another. But it requires us to have regard to all persons who have any claim upon us by reason of their necessities. It binds together men whose hearts beat in unison, and disposes them to offer a welcome to a new brother animated by the same sentiments.

Charity practically includes all other love, and breaks down all artificial barriers. It permits the indulgence of sentiment, so long as this does not

degenerate into selfish exclusiveness; and it deems no sacrifice too great that increases its power of doing good: means and strength may sometimes fail in the exercise of charity, but the heart never.

II. Let us endeavour to understand the real nature of charity, in order that we may never be deceived by the seduction of any less worthy love.

II. The Absence of Selfishness in Mary.

I. Mary loved her Son beyond all power of expression; the perfection of her love was only equalled by the perfection of her generosity, for her charity was free from all exclusiveness.

She loved her Son, but for whom? For God, for she only consented to receive that Son because it was God's will.

She did not keep her Son for herself alone. During the whole of Our Lord's public life she deprived herself of His society, and gave Him up for all with a generosity which made her the Queen of Apostles.

II. Let us try to appreciate the full depth of Our Lady's charity, and, while we admire, let us resolve to follow her example.

III. Our Victory over Selfishness.

I. Let us carefully examine the possible forms of our selfishness:

1. In our *affections*, particular friendship, jealous of rivalry.

2. In our *sympathies*, love limited to one country, one institution, one province, or one locality.

3. In our *actions*, and *the use of our wealth*. Do

we willingly share our resources, or the fruits of our talents, with others ?

4. In our *manner of doing good*, do we neglect possible works of charity through caprice, or sloth, or wounded self-love ?

II. Let us endeavour to understand the great law of charity, remembering the words of Pope Leo XIII., in his Encyclical of May 15, 1901 : " Whoever has received from the bounty of God a greater abundance of temporal goods, be they exterior and corporal, or be they spiritual, to this purpose has he received them : that he may use them for the perfecting of his own nature, and at the same time as steward of God's providence for the benefit of others."

COLLOQUY.

Let us adore the Heart of Jesus, and all His goodness ; then let us contemplate the heart of Mary, and rejoice to see in her a perfect follower of her Son. And our own hearts are so narrow : O Jesus, by the most pure heart of Mary, make my heart like unto Thine.

Ave Maria.

THIRTY-FIRST SATURDAY : THE CHARITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Charity and Other Virtues.

Plan of the Meditation.—We shall conclude our meditations on the charity of Mary with a comparison between charity and the other virtues ;

and while it increases our reverence for the Queen of all virtues, this comparison will help us to appreciate better the excellence of all the virtues of Mary. We shall consider—(1) charity, *the crown of all virtues;* (2) charity, *the source of all virtues;* (3) the perfection of virtue in Mary.

MEDITATION.

"Nunc autem manent fides, spes, caritas, tria hæc; major autem horum est caritas"—And now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greater of these is charity (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the Blessed Virgin arriving at the house of her cousin Elizabeth.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for an increase of those virtues of which charity is the source and the crown.

I. Charity, the Crown of Virtues.

I. 1. The excellence of charity is not a mere primacy of honour; charity is the necessary complement of all other virtues, like the roof which covers a building, and without which the building is open to the wind and rain, and unfit for habitation.

In what impressive language St. Paul inculcates the necessity of this virtue! "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and

if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3).

2. When we have weighed the force of each of these expressions, let us try to explain them. Why this indispensable need of charity? Because we are made for God. All, therefore, is useless which does not lead us back to Him, and there is but one way to lead us back to God, the way of charity. As God has made us the magnificent offer of His friendship, He will accept no other homage, no other gift, no other offering, but the homage and the gifts and the offerings of friends. If charity is not present, the other virtues will not bring us back to God. It is by climbing the ladder of charity that man is enabled to come near to infinite goodness.

The greatest sinner has the power of doing good actions on which God in His mercy will deign to look favourably; but they serve only to plead for the restoration of charity, without which there is no merit for the life to come. At the hour of death, if we have not charity, we shall realize that utter vanity of all else on which the Apostle insists so strongly in his Epistle to the Corinthians.

II. What pity we ought to feel for the pride, the boasting, the riotous mirth and idle pretensions of sinners! Their souls are dead; let us pray that our souls may never be in that unhappy condition.

II. Charity, the Source of Virtues.

I. 1. If God takes pleasure only in the work which is completed by charity, every good and generous action not only can be referred to Him, but should be done for the love we bear Him. Has He not said that He regards whatever we do for the least of His brethren as done for Himself?

Charity may thus inspire every holy thought, every good word, every praiseworthy act; it covers with its pure gold every offering that we make to God.

Our Lord confirmed this truth when He told the Pharisees that the whole law depended on two commandments: the first, the love of God; and the second, which was like to the first, the love of our neighbour. If all is a way of loving God, all may be done for love of God.

2. How profitable it would be for us if only a charitable intention were the mainspring of all our good actions! Then, indeed, would our virtues be real and meritorious. There is a false kindness, which, being only weakness and cowardice, makes itself an accomplice in evil, and there is an excessive zeal which bears no fruit; and the reason seems to be indicated by what St. Paul says of charity: "Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity. but rejoiceth with the truth" (1 Cor. xiii. 4-6).

Can we help thinking of some zealous advocates of good causes, full of gall and bitterness, exag-

gerating evils, irritating those who might be converted? Is it the cause of God which excites them in this manner? Are they not at heart envious and ambitious, seeking after some interest of their own? These are not the Machabees whom God chose for His own people. They are in danger of doing harm even when they stand up for the truth.

II. 1. Let us strive that the spirit of charity may be the motive of all our actions.

2. Let us take care that our zeal be always prompted by a pure intention, and accompanied by prudence and patience.

III. Mary and the Other Virtues.

I. The connection of charity with the other virtues leads us without hesitation to infer from the charity of the Blessed Virgin her perfect practice of all virtues. We are told but little about the life of Mary, but the Evangelist has told us enough to assure us of her faith, her constancy, and her piety; and knowing that the soul of Mary was full of holy charity, we cannot doubt that she was a mirror of all virtues.

II. Let us from a consideration of this truth draw a practical conclusion that the best and surest way of acquiring all the virtues is to accustom ourselves to act in the spirit of love, and to base all our actions on the law of charity. In the words of St. Augustine: *Ubi amatur non laboratur, aut labor amatur*—Love takes away labour, or makes us love it.

COLLOQUY.

Let us kneel at the feet of the Queen of Heaven, and as we see her decked in her robe of all the virtues, let us ask that our charity may in some measure resemble that which was so conspicuous in her.

Regina cœli, lætare!
Queen of Heaven, rejoice!

THIRTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE HUMILITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The Beauty of that Humility.

Plan of the Meditation.—The object of this meditation is to enable us better to appreciate all the beauty and greatness of genuine humility—a truly Christian virtue—and the foundation of all spiritual life. We shall consider—(1) the *nature and characteristics of humility;* (2) the *admirable humility of the Mother of God;* and (3) the *means we have of imitating Mary* in that virtue.

MEDITATION.

"Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde"—Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart (St. Matt. xi. 29).

First Prelude.—Let us think of Mary in her lowly dwelling at Nazareth at the moment when she consents to become the Mother of God.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask for the grace to see the beauty of humility in order that we may resemble our dear Mother in Heaven.

I. The Nature and Characteristics of Humility.

I. 1. Humility, a virtue of free will, teaches us to submit our innate desire for greatness to the designs of Providence. From this short definition we see the high value of this virtue.

It resides in the superior appetite, which finds its only rule in God ; and it is governed by a perfect submission to the will of God and the designs of His Providence. If we are truly humble, we accept the talents which God has given us, and the circumstances in which He has placed us, and are content.

Nothing great is inconsistent with humility ; but, according to the degree of its perfection, it moderates our desire for worldly greatness, and prevents us from seeking our advancement in opposition to the will of God, or by unfair means, or with excessive anxiety.

2. Is not this *just?* How can we deny to the will of God a sovereign right to rule all things, and to assign us our proper place in the order of creation ?

Is it not *noble?* The humble man is truly *magnanimous* in making his own advancement subordinate to the public good, in overcoming the strongest desires of nature, in freely recognizing the talents and merits of others. All these things are the essentials of humility. The humble man is magnanimous also in his undertakings. He despises all petty devices for obtaining success ; he is incorruptible in duty, and no self-love prevents him from showing generosity and consideration for

others ; he will never omit any good and useful action for the sake of something which will only bring fame and honour.

Is it not *Christian?* This thought should win our hearts to humility ; it is a *Christian* virtue. In theory, our reason approves of humility, but our practice hardly corresponds with our convictions. To be capable of practising humility, we must draw near to God as only a Christian can, and in God's will recognize the will of our Father. Even the example of our incarnate Saviour was required to teach us to give up our inordinate anxiety for honours and distinction.

II. Let us try to realize the beauty and importance of humility, that we may always follow its glorious banner.

II. The Humility of the Mother of God.

I. The Blessed Virgin was humble throughout her whole life—as humble after her maternity as before it. She was humble in the presence of Elizabeth, in the presence of Joseph, in all her private life ; humble during the public life of our Saviour, voluntarily effacing herself while He preached the kingdom of God. She reserved to herself only the right to reappear in order to share with Jesus the supreme dishonour of the Cross, and this humility remained with her after Jesus had risen to His glory.

But let us contemplate the magnificent spectacle of this humility in the mystery of the Annunciation. Before the arrival of the Angel, she had no thought of any exaltation ; she did not suspect

that God might fix His choice upon her. The arrival of the celestial messenger did not arouse any feeling of pride. She was not led to accept the invitation conveyed to her by any desire for her own glory ; she submitted to the will of God. When her cousin congratulated her on the high honour that had been conferred upon her, she only answered : " My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Her humility was all the more admirable by reason of the eminent dignity offered to her, the want of time for reflection, and the flattering praise of the heavenly messenger.

II. Is it astonishing after this that the holy Fathers of the Church have been struck with wonder at the humility of the Blessed Virgin, and have found in it a fitting prelude to her supreme exaltation ? Let us try to follow them in their admiring reverence for our Blessed Mother.

III. The Acquisition of Humility.

I. The full possession of such a treasure as real humility necessitates continuous and prolonged efforts, made under the influence of God's grace. But we ought to think no trouble too great to acquire it.

On the other hand, we ought to turn everything to account, even our weakness and our frailty. We have to be fully convinced of the beauty and necessity of humility, and how shall we best be persuaded ? It will be useful, no doubt, to consider well the nature of humility, its purpose and characteristics ; but the argument will be unan-

swerable if we strengthen it by a consideration of our own insignificance, and the faults we continually commit. Here we may observe, according to the teaching of St. Ignatius, a kind of sanctifying power in our past failings. The memory of them may make us more docile and submissive to the hand of God. His yoke will appear sweet, and the trials of this world light, if we think of the torments from which they save us, and the eternal misery from which we escape by obedience to the Divine law.

II. Let us examine ourselves to see whether we have made the best of our opportunities for acquiring the virtue of humility. What shame it will be to us if the thought of our past errors produces in us nothing but querulousness and discontent!

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask pardon for our obstinate pride and vanity, and let us beg our dear Mother to accept our resolutions of humility, and to teach us the secret of that beautiful virtue.

Ave Maria.

THIRTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE HUMILITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Admirable Effects of that Humility.

Plan of the Meditation.—We shall consider in this meditation three admirable results of humility. *It establishes us*—(1) *in the truth;* (2) *in grace and virtue;* (3) *in peace and happiness.*

MEDITATION.

"*Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam*"—*God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (St. Jas. iv. 6).

First Prelude.—Let us contemplate the Blessed Virgin in the presence of her cousin Elizabeth, whom she salutes first. She replies to Elizabeth's praise by exclaiming: "My soul doth magnify the Lord . . . He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid," etc.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may better understand the fruits of humility in order that we may admire them in our dear Mother, and strive earnestly to acquire them.

I. Humility and Truth.

I. 1. Let us be quite honest with ourselves. Have our relations with our neighbour been always free from insincerity and deceit? Can we say that we have never been guilty of lying? We have allowed things to be said in our favour that we know to be false; we have accepted compliments that we have not deserved; we have received just censure with indignant denial; we have perverted the truth in order to make our stories more interesting, or to increase our own importance or belittle our rivals. Why have we been guilty of such meanness? From motives of boastfulness, vanity, or pride.

2. Absolute sincerity is the characteristic of the man who is truly humble. Humility removes from our intelligence all delusions about ourselves, our

talents, and our merits. It removes from our will all vainglory ; it teaches us to tell the truth without distortion or reservation, and to act without pretence or ostentation.

3. See how Mary told the Angel plainly what might have been an obstacle to her exaltation to the supreme dignity of Mother of God. She made known her vow of virginity, which seemed incompatible with the proposal made to her. She could not have done this if she had thought only of her own elevation, if she had not made all her desires subordinate to the will of God.

II. How admirable is perfect candour and sincerity ! Men respect a man who is always loyal and straightforward, while they have only ridicule and contempt for one who tries to take to himself the credit due to another. And let us not forget that if the vain man succeeds for a time in deceiving others, his meanness is already known to God and the Angels, and will on the day of judgment be made manifest to the whole world.

II. Humility and Actual Grace.

I. 1. *God giveth grace to the humble.* Why ? Because the humble man will give Him that glory which was the end God had in view in creating the world. The proud man would only abuse the Divine graces.

2. Without humility all virtue perishes. The soul of virtue is in the right intention, and the proud man corrupts his intention. We cannot practise virtue without the help of God. There is no merit in an act which is thoroughly vicious in

its origin, and the help of God is withdrawn from the man who ceases to be humble.

3. On the other hand, humility prepares the way to every virtue. The humble man, blessed with more abundant grace, professes that submission to God which makes faith easy. He is free both from rash presumption and from fear of failure, and displays his fortitude ; he is generous, because he is not greedy for honours. His submission to God's will enables him to keep his passions under the control of reason, and the humble man is chaste, as it were, without effort. He is beyond the influence of envy or jealousy, and what is there to hinder him from following the great commandment of God to love all men ? Every good action is a form of that submission to God which is the result of true humility.

II. Let us contemplate the effects of humility in Mary. The grace of maternity followed her humble submission to the Divine Word. This is the teaching of the holy Fathers—that God would never have chosen any woman whose humility was less perfect than Mary's. How calmly she deliberated on the great design for which the Angel asked her consent ! Only an extraordinary humility at such a moment could have preserved her from agitating doubt. Humility protected her virginal purity, and dictated her modest answer to the Angel. If she had been less humble, she would have been willing to sacrifice her perfect chastity. Similarly, the charity she showed to her cousin is all explained by her profound humility.

III. Humility and Peace with Happiness.

I. So far as we can follow Mary in her inner life, we see her quietly fulfilling her duties, happy, content with her state, with her dearly-loved Son, and with the friends who surrounded her. All her trials were softened by the sentiment of calm and peace.

II. Humility prevents disquiet or anxiety in the pursuit of any object, and discouragement after failure. Why should a man be anxious or cast down who has only acted for the glory of God, and cheerfully accepts all the dispositions of His Providence? Peace reigns in the souls of the humble—a foretaste of that ineffable peace which we shall enjoy in Heaven. Even in Heaven, in the difference of glory and reward, what is the secret of the perfect content of all the blessed? Charity made possible by perfect humility, and loving submission to God their Father.

III. As we long for peace and tranquillity, let us redouble our efforts in the practice of humility, and turn a deaf ear to the voices which would lead us astray.

COLLOQUY.

Let us consider how Our Lord pointed to humility as the distinctive mark of His own character: "Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart" (St. Matt. xi. 29). St. Paul tells us (Phil. ii. 8) that "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross. For which cause God also hath highly exalted Him." What supreme honour

done to this virtue! The same was the characteristic of Mary, and why should it not be our own? Let us earnestly beg of Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, the inestimable blessing of a profound humility.

Ave Maria.

THIRTY-FOURTH SATURDAY: THE PRUDENCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In order to acquire a true idea of this virtue, whose influence directs the whole of our spiritual life, we shall consider—(1) *the true nature of prudence;* (2) *the intention* which is the soul of that virtue; and (3) *its admirable effects;* and in each point we shall meditate on the example of the Mother of God.

MEDITATION.

"*Principium sapientiæ, timor Domini: et scientia sanctorum, prudentia*"—*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is prudence* (Prov. ix. 10).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the scene of the Annunciation, in which Mary's prudence was as conspicuous as her humility.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray God to give us a large share of so necessary a virtue.

I. THE TRUE NATURE OF PRUDENCE.

I. 1. The name of prudence is frequently given to a man's cleverness in attaining the object of his

desire, whether it be good, indifferent, or even bad. He is called a prudent man if he knows how to take care of his health, his interests, or his popularity. The wicked may possess this cleverness as well as the good. Has not Our Lord said, indeed, that in the conduct of their affairs " the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light " ? (St. Luke xvi. 8).

2. Prudence may shortly be defined as the habit of intellectual discernment, which, under the influence of a right will, enables us to seek, prefer, and put into practice the acts which virtue requires. It presupposes a good disposition of the will. Under the impulse of the will, the mind deliberates on the actions to be done or left undone, decides to act well, and commands the doing of the good act or the omission of what ought not to be done. The virtue of prudence is the ally of good intention, which it directs in its choice of all that is good. Mere cleverness may be a useful adjunct to the virtue of prudence.

3. Cleverness is highly appreciated, but what is it in comparison with prudence ? Cleverness may prolong by a few days a perishable life, prudence makes it continue for ever. The former may procure us some transitory praise, may teach us to govern subjects who will soon be mixed with their king in one common dust ; virtue gives us the enjoyment of eternal honours, procures a happiness without end to the passions which it has held in subjection, and prepares a decisive victory for the day when men shall rise again from the grave.

How God laughs at human counsels ! How many of these clever men, so skilled in temporal

business, are on the way to shipwreck in the affairs uf eternity, and are likely to cry out one day in the most bitter disillusion : " These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth " (Wisdom v. 3-6). What a comforting hope for those who have received the precious grace of final perseverance ! But we must make good use of our natural prudence. This is a part of our bounden duty.

II. Let us consider the example of the Blessed Virgin. In her vow of virginity, in the answer she gave to the Angel, in the sacrifice of her Son, in her forgiveness of His murderers, she did not listen to the voice of the world or the flesh, but, rising superior to their counsels, she followed the guidance of Divine love.

Let us remark the beauty of this prudence. Is it not the climax of a series of victories over those enemies to whom most men succumb ?

III. Let us turn our thoughts to ourselves, and see how easily we allow some other principle than that of virtue to be the motive of our actions. What becomes of our *prayers*, if worldly affairs demand our attention ? What becomes of our *charity*, if we meet with some slight rebuff ? What becomes of our *zeal*, if we encounter contradiction or failure ?

Let us humble ourselves, and resolve to walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, " redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

II. The Intention, which is the Soul of Prudence.

I. By the grace of God we, who perhaps ought to despair of attaining to human and worldly prudence, may all aspire to possess heavenly prudence in perfection. It is in vain for us to desire health, or fortune, or popularity. If the requisite conditions are not present, our intention will not make up for them, any more than it will make up for defects in our intelligence or our judgment.

But by an admirable disposition of Providence supernatural prudence is so intimately connected with the good intention that the latter ensures the former There is no question of intellectual power. Error, which may hinder the outward result, cannot tarnish the moral beauty of an act which is inspired by a right intention.

This reflection, which is very obvious, and at the same time profoundly true, should save us from envy and regret. How many simple souls there are whose lot is far more enviable than that of the worldly-wise !

II. Not only is a good intention a guarantee of prudence, but the better the intention the higher the degree of virtue. Let us consider what qualities are required.

1. The intention must be *steadfast*, that it may not be shaken by temptations from within or without. Without this steadfastness of the intention, our prudence cannot be constant.

2. The intention must be *pure*. If any unworthy motive enters into it, we lose our capacity for right judgment. We decide in a hurry, and

rush to wrong conclusions, and the result will show how we have been deceived.

3. The loftier the intention, the surer pledge we have of prudence. Praiseworthy is the intention to do what is good ; more so is that to do what is better ; most of all is that to do what is perfect.

This teaches us how important it is to have a strong will, and to be entirely sincere with ourselves. This fortitude and this sincerity will not only give us constancy and purity, but they will elevate our intention, and give us courage to aim high. The want of courage explains why true holiness is so seldom found.

III. 1. The intention of the Blessed Virgin is shown in her words, *Ecce ancilla Domini*—Behold the handmaid of the Lord ! and *Humilitatem ancillæ suæ*—the humility of His handmaid. We read in these words the intention to serve God in all things, to regulate her conduct always according to the Divine will. That is the highest of all intentions. Nothing is good except so far as it is willed or approved by God. To seek the will of God for its own sake is the most sublime rule of all. That is the intention which most closely unites the creature to the Creator.

2. Let us follow the example of Mary, and set our minds on doing the will of God, and loving it like children of that God with whom she was so intimately united.

III. The Admirable Effects of Prudence.

I. 1. We must not lose sight of the benefit we derive from the possession of this excellent virtue.

In all the circumstances of our life it leads us to choose what is morally good. The effect of perfect prudence is to lead us to what is best. It tends to make us holy, as God wishes us to be.

2. Let us meditate on the beauty of holiness. Nothing is so rare as the perfect realization of our ideals. The sculptor is disappointed with his statue, the pen of the writer fails to express his noblest thoughts ; and what ideal is grander than that of our holiness, as it is conceived in the mind of God ? Is there anything we can desire more than to come near to that ideal ? Let us think no sacrifice too great, in order to acquire the virtue of prudence.

II. In Mary this prudence obtains its fullest effect. She alone of all human beings realizes the ideal of her holiness. Placed by the first grace of God on the loftiest height, she raised there the spiritual edifice of her perfection, fair and stately as God had desired. In all her actions she responded to the invitation of God. This is her first fulness of grace, which consists in the absence of all imperfection. How incomparable is the Mother whom God has given us !

Let us offer Mary our congratulations. Let our reverence for her increase day by day, and let us not be afraid to correspond with the grace from on high. How could we be afraid to accept the invitation of God, afraid to live holy lives? Let us put away from us all such unworthy faint-heartedness, which will cause us to lose the gifts that God offers us.

COLLOQUY.

Let us humbly beg Mary's help, while we consider all that has been said on the subject of prudence, its conditions, and its effects. Is not this the time for coming to a decision as to our life in the future, for resolving to aim at perfection? Let us ask ourselves how we have failed hitherto, and why; and then let us decide on the line of conduct we shall follow, and ask Mary to bless it.

Virgo prudentissima, ora pro nobis.
Virgin most prudent, pray for us.

THIRTY-FIFTH SATURDAY: THE RELIGION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—May this meditation inspire us with a resolution to stand up for the rights of God, and to give Him all that is His due! We shall consider—(1) *the virtue of religion;* (2) *its language;* (3) *its acts.*

MEDITATION.

"Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei, Deo"—Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's (St. Matt. xxii. 21).

First Prelude.—Let us contemplate Mary praying in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may be filled with the knowledge of what we owe to God, and may be jealous of His honour and glory.

I. The Virtue of Religion.

I. Religion is the knowledge of the rights of God over us, and the desire to render Him the supreme worship that is due to Him. This desire to fulfil exactly all our duties towards God makes of religion a sort of justice, and the supremacy of the rights of God makes it the highest justice, and, after the theological virtues, the first of the moral virtues. It is that justice which makes us eager to render to God the things that are God's.

But, alas! how this virtue is neglected nowadays! Men boast of being honest in all their relations with their neighbours; they preach justice until charity is forgotten; but they forget, they avowedly despise, the justice which they owe to God. In more than one country men refuse to God all public and official honour; they will not even pronounce His name, but make public parade of absolute atheism.

II. How deeply Mary realized the rights of God over us, and how earnest was her desire to pay Him all that was His due! But how can we read in her soul the ardour of her devotion? We can only judge of it by some of its outpourings; we see her profession of entire submission in her answer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" and her enthusiasm in the *Magnificat*.

III. Let us realize the rights of God over us, and imitate Mary in paying Him the homage that is His due.

Then, when we see the miserable apostasy of governments, we shall feel within us something of that zeal for God which animated Mathathias

when he saw the Jew sacrificing to the idols upon the altar at the order of King Antiochus (1 Macha. ii. 23), and shall show our ardent desire to see the rights of God respected. If a man loves our Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength, he cannot bear to see Him insulted or despised.

We must have no regard to that miscalled justice which violates the most indefectible titles. Let us protest against this arrogant disregard of our dependence upon God, our Creator.

II. The Language of Religion.

I. We render to God the things that are God's by offering Him our adoration, our gratitude, our confidence, and our prayers. We adore the infinite Majesty of God with a supreme worship which we give to Him alone ; we give thanks to our supreme Benefactor ; we trust in His fatherly providence ; we pray to Him because He is infinite goodness ; we pray for His help and His grace, and, when we have sinned, for His mercy and pardon. These are the intentions of all perfect prayers, such as those which the Church puts into the mouth of her priests ; but in all her prayers she asks everything through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The adoration, the thanksgiving that we offer to God, the remembrance of benefits received, animate our confidence, and preserve us from impatience, and murmurings, and from that discouragement which makes us give up the practice of prayer ; and the prayer so offered up brings

down upon us new favours which increase our adoration and gratitude.

II. Can we doubt that all these sentiments found a place in Mary's prayers? The Gospel shows us Jesus crossing the mountains, spending whole nights in prayer, and urgently supplicating His Father in the Garden of Olives, while His sweat of blood bedewed the soil. And is not Mary the most perfect follower of Jesus? Was it not at her appeal that the Redeemer came down into the world, that the water was changed into wine? And did not her prayer help to bring down the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles?

III. It is easier for us to show our anger against the wicked than to fulfil all the duties of true piety ourselves. Let us understand that among our duties is that of praying *well*. How much that word means, and how many imperfections it must recall to us! The greatest mistake that we make is to say many prayers in a hurry, rather than a few with care and attention. Our greatest faults are caused by want of order and of recollection. We neglect to concentrate our thoughts before praying, to fix our attention on God, whom we are addressing, and we choose places and circumstances in which our attention is likely to be distracted. Let us correct our faults, and ask pardon for our past negligence, remembering at the same time that we ought not to be discouraged by involuntary distractions; these do not prevent our prayers from rising to God, who sees the desire of our hearts, and always gives us credit for our good intentions.

Let us resolve that every day some prayer shall

be specially well made; and whenever we address ourselves to God, let us thank Him for His favours in the past, and ask His mercy and help for the future.

III. The Acts of Religion.

I. Religion inspires acts of many kinds. Besides the verbal homage of adoration, praise, and prayer, it takes the form of a consecration, of a vow, of an oath; it sanctifies special feast-days, and, above all, it offers sacrifice. The very action of sacrifice is an expression of our belief in the sovereignty of God, and our entire subjection to Him, and our gratitude for all His benefits: it is the sum and substance of religion.

II. Jesus Christ on Calvary is the great exemplar of sacrifice. But next to Him is Mary, ratifying, as His Mother, the offering of the Great High Priest, her Son. Moreover, following in the footsteps of Our Lord, she conforms scrupulously to all the precepts of the law concerning the worship of God; and to this she adds the spontaneous homage of her whole life.

III. Our religion should similarly include participation in the offering of the sacrifice of the new law, the observance of all the commandments of God and the Church, and other acts of worship which our devotion suggests.

1. The Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated in the Church by the offering of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The same High Priest, Jesus Christ, is still the Sacrificer, but acting through a minister delegated by the Church to offer the homage of all the faithful. Let us remember our part in this

sacrifice, and unite ourselves with the priest in the offering of Jesus Christ to His Father. Let us rejoice that, although of ourselves we are unable to offer to God anything worthy of Him, we are permitted to join in this august sacrifice of praise and propitiation.

2. While we see the lamentable indifference which surrounds us, let us be most careful to observe all the commandments of the Church, particularly those which relate to the worship of God. Let nothing except the most urgent necessity prevent us from assisting at Mass, and, if our profession requires it, reciting the Divine Office. Let us be equally careful in observing the rules as to the time and manner of fulfilling our duty in this respect. This was the spirit of the Saints, who, by their scrupulous obedience, showed their perfect humility and their desire to serve God. They loved to mortify themselves for the sake of God. Let us endeavour to spread abroad this spirit of sacrifice, especially by the education of children and young people.

3. The free acts of devotion which circumstances suggest to us should complete the practice of religion. St. Peter exhorts all Christians to be "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 St. Pet. ii. 5); and these offerings are meritorious because they involve the sacrifice of ourselves and our lives to the service of God. Such are the sacrifices which are required by the obligations of filial piety, the observance of conjugal chastity, or the perfect purity of religious life; such is the offering which religion enables us to

make to God. The noblest of all is the consecration of our lives to His service by religious profession.

Let us not refuse any of these sacrifices that God may require of us ; and let us never grudge our children the honour and happiness of offering them, but rather let us infuse a spirit of generosity into all those who are under our influence.

COLLOQUY.

Let us lament over the sad spectacle of public neglect of God. Let us show that we recognize His supreme dominion over us, and are willing to render to Him the things that are His. Lastly, let us pray God, through the intercession of Mary, to quicken in us the spirit of prayer and piety.

Ave Maria.

THIRTY-SIXTH SATURDAY : THE JUSTICE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In this exercise we shall contemplate the spectacle of a perfect life, modelled on justice and truth, and we shall consider—(1) *justice and its perfection ;* (2) *the perfection of justice in Mary ;* (3) *this perfection in ourselves.*

MEDITATION.

" Qui timent Dominum invenient judicium justum, et justitias quasi lumen accendent "—They that fear the Lord shall find just judgment, and shall kindle justice as a light (Ecclus. xxxii. 20).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the modest dwelling sanctified by the presence of the Holy Family, in which Mary showed herself throughout her life a model of all virtues.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that, following the example of Jesus and Mary, we may always hunger and thirst after justice.

I. The Perfection of Justice

I. Justice, properly speaking, is a cardinal virtue which directs a man in his relations with another; a great virtue, the foundation of the social order. But how much more exalted when we consider it with all the other virtues and perfections which follow in its train! Justice makes it impossible for us to use any unfair or doubtful means to obtain our ends. Equity is its crown, truth is its language, and its conduct is regulated by candour and honesty.

II. Let us try to understand the full beauty of that virtue, which sets us free from many anxious cares and gives peace to the soul. How pleasing was this virtue to Our Lord! Is it not a form of that simplicity which the Master so strongly inculcated when He showed His hatred of all deceit and prevarication by saying to His disciples, "Let your speech be yea, yea: no, no" (St. Matt v. 37).

Persons who make profession of piety must be careful to give an example of more than ordinary justice. If they do not wish to bring contempt upon religion, they must show themselves to be men of the nicest honour, and impartial beyond

suspicion ; they must avoid not only unfair dealings, but all such trickery and sharp practice as, without being actually criminal, suggests a sordid and grasping nature entirely inconsistent with their profession.

A consideration of these things should make us reflect, and see whether we have nothing to reproach ourselves with—whether we have never been guilty of juggling with our consciences, and using means of doubtful morality to promote our own interests, or other more sacred interests which have been confided to us. God and the Church can never be served by such means as these.

II. The Perfect Justice of Mary.

I. The whole life of Mary illustrated the profound sense of justice which actuated her : simple and dignified, free from all pretence and dissimulation, she was always ready to give every one his due.

This perfection might otherwise be inferred from her justice towards God, and from her other virtues, and the general dispositions of her soul. The reverence which she professed for the rights of God, the Creator of all things, strengthened her respect for the rights of others. In the will of God, which was the guide of her life, she read the origin and foundation of the rights of creatures. In her humility and detachment from the things of this world, and her unfailing confidence in God, she was not likely to be tempted to injustice by any earthly consideration.

II. Do we wish to perfect our justice ? Let us

practise detachment in order to keep our hearts perfectly pure, and commit to God with the fullest abandonment our present and our future. The ordinary events of our life may bring us into difficult situations, and only a complete trust in Providence can keep us free from all temptations to injustice.

III. Our Justice.

I. "Lord," asks the Psalmist, "who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest in Thy holy hill?" And He answers: "He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice" (Ps. xiv. 1, 2). Then he goes on to enumerate all the forms of injustice from which that man is free.

We should do well to meditate on the whole of this psalm. It may seem unnecessary to insist upon justice in Christians who aspire to perfection, for it would suggest the existence of unfair prejudices, the very suspicion of which is an insult; but let us think what the human heart is, how strong is the fascination of wealth, how easy is self-deception, how dangerous the temptation of straitened circumstances. How few men can pride themselves on always resisting the importunity of unfair requests; how few there are who have a conscience perfectly void of reproach, and who live without fear of their last hour!

II. Let us take care not only to act with perfect justice in important matters, but to be scrupulously exact about small things, examining ourselves as to our conduct in the past, so as to get rid of everything that in the least resembles falsehood or hypocrisy.

1. What is the quality of our justice, of our equity, our impartiality?

2. What is the quality of our veracity? How do we judge others? How do we speak of others? Let us not forget that justice is due to all, and that it is possible to be unjust even in fighting the enemies of a good cause.

We must be perfectly just in all our dealings, whatever it may cost us; one by one, let us correct the failings that self-examination reveals to us.

COLLOQUY.

Let us offer to Mary, and through her to Jesus, a firm resolution to be always strictly just and honourable. We shall be eternally glad to attribute to our devotion to Mary our perfect freedom from the slightest suspicion of injustice.

Ave Maria.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE TEMPERANCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In the first point of this meditation we shall take a *general view of temperance,* in the fullest meaning of the word, and we shall devote the second and third points to that just practical moderation *which excludes stubbornness* and *ensures affability.*

MEDITATION.

"Quasi Libanus odorem suavitatis habete"—Give ye a sweet odour as frankincense (Ecclus. xxxix. 18).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the company of

guests at the wedding-feast at Cana, the Blessed Virgin among them.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may thoroughly understand and practise the virtue of temperance.

I. General View of Temperance.

I. The cardinal virtue of temperance keeps the sensible appetite within reasonable bounds, and restrains it from unlawful pursuit of the things that most of all entice and allure man. It would be an insult to the Blessed Virgin to congratulate her on her complete victory over the lower appetites; her passions, far from being opposed to reason, were always kept in complete subordination to it. Let us see how the special beauty of temperance, moderation, characterized all the intercourse of the Mother of God with her neighbour. It might be said of her, in the words of the Wise Man, that she budded forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters, and gave a sweet odour of frankincense; that she sent forth flowers as the lily, and yielded a smell, and brought forth leaves in grace, and praised with canticles, and blessed the Lord in his works (Ecclus. xxxix. 17-19). All the charms of the God-Man were found in fullest abundance in His Holy Mother.

II. The perfection of the Blessed Virgin's virtues should make us turn our attention to our own acts and judgments.

1. It is to their own imperfections that even virtuous men owe their awkward, uncouth, eccentric manners, which bring virtue into dis-

repute, and furnish a pretext for calumny and detraction. Knowingly or unknowingly, we are very severe critics of virtue. Suppose there are two men, one of whom, lax in principle and conduct, commits numberless transgressions of the moral law, while the other, who is desirous of perfection, errs by some extravagance. We extend to the former an indulgence which costs us nothing, but the manners of the other displease and disgust us. Is there not a certain amount of envy in this difference of attitude? One man is down, and we find it easy to be generous towards him; the other stands upright, and shows a courage of which we feel the want in ourselves; he is on his way to victory, while we are conscious of defeat: the first has only to ask for God's forgiveness, but the latter must ask men's pardon for his superiority over them.

Let us confess our own injustice in matters which concern ourselves, and let us learn to recognize true merit.

2. But if we have much to amend in respect of the justice of our judgments of others, let us be careful not to bring discredit on religion by any laxity of our own. The Saints were lenient towards others, but were rigorous judges of their own faults; they did not seek to be seen or admired; within permitted limits they were full of courtesy and politeness. Those who call for human respect seek for sympathy at the expense of duty; railers and slanderers pursue it at the expense of others; the Saints would only have it at their own expense. Should we not have the courage to choose the better part?

II. The Avoiding of Stubbornness.

I. In contrast to those vacillating people who can never make up their own minds, there are others who are too headstrong and dogmatic in expressing their opinions. They draw up for themselves certain fixed rules of conduct to which they attribute an unchangeableness which belongs only to first principles, not even to positive laws. No consideration will induce them to admit any exception. Woe to him who comes into collision with them! he had better try to move a rock. This inflexibility renders a man dictatorial, arrogant, and impervious to reason; and in reality what does it mean? An unlimited confidence in one's own judgment, and a selfish regard for one's own interest and convenience, for this rigorous adherence to a fixed rule dispenses with the necessity of making allowance for circumstances which alter cases. In short, it is nothing but pride and sensuality.

II. This was not Mary's nature. Her vow of virginity was dearer to her than life; yet when it was proposed to her that she should become a mother, she did not reply by an unqualified and categorical refusal, but plainly stated the difficulty, and awaited the answer of the Angel, to find in it her enlightenment.

III. Similar moderation will enable us to avoid hasty actions, which are often followed by disastrous results, and will inspire us with a charity which cannot fail to do good to our neighbour.

Let us take care that our firm adherence to just principles does not degenerate into an obstinate attachment to our own opinion.

III. Affability.

I. All we know of the life of the Blessed Virgin shows her kindness and consideration for others. Neither her intimate union with God, nor her detachment from earthly things, prevented her from maintaining friendly relations with her neighbours, offering them her services and congratulations, being present at their feasts, and showing them the most delicate attention. She knew how to combine in her life the greatest personal austerity with constant amiability, absolute correctness of conduct with a courtesy full of charm.

II. The affable man is neither morose nor given to flattery; without any immoderate effort to please, he avoids the faults of peevishness or untimely contradiction. He practises an excellent form of temperance; he bears the distinctive mark of a perfect virtue. Virtue, indeed, regulates not only our relations with God, but our relations with one another, and it is a part of the plan of our common Creator and Father so to regulate them that there may be a friendly intimacy among the members of the great human family. Virtue is sociable by its nature and purpose.

It is a great art, beyond doubt, to be able to adapt oneself to any society without either ostentation or loss of dignity. It will be impossible to acquire that art without great self-denial and constant vigilance, which, with mental prayer and self-examination, will shew us all the snares and temptations into which we are liable to fall.

But how precious is the art when acquired! It will help us to win more souls to Christ than we could ever do by preaching.

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask Mary to help us to acquire that perfect temperance which gives itself wholly to God, and puts itself at the service of men for their welfare and consolation.

Tota pulchra es, O Maria.
Thou art all fair, O Mary.

THIRTY-EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE VIRGINITY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—Chastity is a part of temperance, and virginity is the perfection of chastity. In the virginity of Mary we shall consider—(1) *its essential perfection;* (2) the *privilege bestowed by God;* (3) the immaculate and perpetual virginity which entitled Mary to be called the *Virgin of virgins.*

MEDITATION.

"Ecce Virgo concipiet"—Behold, a Virgin shall conceive (Isa. vii. 14).

First Prelude.—Let us represent to ourselves the house of Nazareth at the moment when Mary replied to the Angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?"

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for grace to understand better the sublime prerogative of Mary, and to have a more perfect reverence for virginity.

I. The Essential Virginity of the Blessed Virgin.

I. Virginity supposes a fact and an intention—the fact of the integrity of the flesh never corrupted by vile, sensual pleasures ; and the intention, the resolution never to indulge in them. This resolution ordinarily takes the form of a vow, for virginity is preserved only for God's sake, and the merit of the vow is greater according to the principle which inspires it, and the length of time for which it is made.

Contemporary writers have sometimes ventured to disparage this virginity, which, from the first ages of the Church, Christian apologists have contrasted with Pagan corruption ; and, claiming for the part of a wife and a mother a superiority over that of a virgin, have accused those vowed to virginity of being actuated by a desire to escape from the pains and duties of maternity.

The Church does not deny the beauty and dignity of Christian marriage, which she defends against heretics, and which she still teaches us was instituted by the Creator at the beginning of the world ; she calls upon man and wife to consider the marriage state as representing her own perfect union with Christ, and maintains the indissolubility of the tie by which they are bound together.

But with what justice, nevertheless, she exalts the state of virginity above that of marriage !

1. The choice of virginity proceeds from a more sublime motive—self-sacrifice, victory, empire over the passions ; while marriage is entered into not without an idea of gratification of the senses.

2. Marriage, while demanding a special devotedness to the narrow circle of the family, makes it impossible for a man to devote himself to more extended interests ; the man who has consecrated his virginity to God is free to offer himself to any noble mission for the good of mankind.

3. The example of a complete victory of the strongest passions of man is more useful than that of the honourable use of lawful pleasures. In contrast to the degrading self-indulgence of a corrupt world, virginity offers the spectacle of its own self-sacrifice. The sight of heroic deeds encourages us to accept more cheerfully the obligations of strict duty.

II. But in Mary there is not even a pretext for the objection ; she is mother as well as virgin, and the beauty of her virginity, united with the sublime duty that she fulfils towards Jesus and Joseph, shines more glorious still.

1. For ages the Church has extolled the *integrity* of Mary in the language of praise in which she proclaims her to have been ever a virgin, before, during, and after the birth of her child—*Virgo ante partum, in partu, et post partum*—an integrity the more remarkable because preserved in the midst of circumstances which seemed to make it impossible.

2. The *vow* of virginity made by Mary, inspired by the ardour of her unequalled charity, was the more meritorious because it was made before the preaching of our Saviour, and at such an early age that it embraced the whole of her earthly existence.

III. According to our condition we can either confirm here the vow of our virginity, or at least realize the full beauty of such a promise. We all

need to be reminded that the dignity and merit of our actions depends on the generosity of our intentions ; they are mean and worthless if they are suggested by personal interest ; but the wider the sphere of their influence, the greater is their merit, till it reaches its highest point when the object of our actions is the universal good, which is God.

II. The Privileged Virginity of Mary.

I. By a singular privilege Mary united to the virginity of her will a virginity of the sensible appetites, which were preserved from all allurements, and this freedom from concupiscence produced in her a harmonious working of all her faculties.

II. Without possessing this advantage, we shall merit to come near it by guarding most carefully the purity we profess. We may give to all great and beautiful things the minimum of respect that is due to them, or a voluntary, devoted attention. A devoted attention to legal justice transforms it into equity, and a perfect detachment from earthly things may rise till it reaches, as it did in St. Francis of Assisi, a spiritual betrothal to poverty ; and certain heroes of charity seem to have lived only for the purpose of relieving the necessities of their neighbours. In the same way, and for stronger reasons, in respect of chastity, we may either resign ourselves to the necessary sacrifices with reluctance, exposing ourselves to struggles, difficulties, and dangers ; or we may vow a positive affection for it, which requires modesty, and such reserve as is

compatible with the duties of our state; and we may thus have a foretaste of the happiness of the Angels. The latter attitude is victorious; the former is so difficult to maintain that it generally ends in defeat.

III. Mary, the Virgin of Virgins.

I. The expression Virgin of virgins indicates an eminent virginity. To deserve it, Mary must be so far superior to all virgins who ever existed as to draw to herself the enthusiastic admiration of the most perfect. As virginity is the perfection of chastity, so the virginity of her who is called the Virgin of virgins is the perfection of virginity itself—a perfection which produces an ideal charm, and possesses a power of communicating itself to others.

Holy Scripture, moreover, puts the virginity of Mary into a class by itself. The name of Virgin appears there as Mary's proper name; she is *the Virgin*, distinguished above all others, occupying an order of her own. Why is this? There is a threefold explanation.

1. In Mary the necessity of virginity does not arise from the vow of a creature making her chastity a part of her faith and her religion, but from the election of God, who chooses her as His bride, and therefore guards and consecrates her for Himself alone. Churches and the holy vessels used in them are consecrated to God, and must not be used for any profane purpose. What shall we say of a consecration effected by God Himself? "The Most High has sanctified His own tabernacle"

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

(Ps. xlv. 5). All other virginity aspires to ascend to Heaven; the virginity of Mary comes down from Heaven clothed with that Sun of justice of which the other asks but a single ray, and, like her maternity, is an indispensable characteristic of the personality of Mary: Mary is, as it were, identified with her virginity.

2. The glorious maternity is not simply associated with her virginity, but flows from it as a necessary consequence. Christ could not descend from Adam by any way which would have seemed to subject His humanity to the stain of original sin; therefore He could only be born of a virgin, and Mary was consecrated a virgin in order that she alone of all women might be able to become the Mother of God.

3. The origin and purpose of this virginity demanded a special inviolability for it: God owed it to Himself to preserve and protect it. The virginity of Mary was unique in its source, its purpose, and its inviolability; in her it attains an ideal perfection.

Its communicative power is attested by all the ages. From the days of the catacombs Mary is proposed as the model of all virgins; she loves to bless them, and to multiply their number.

These are the reasons why Mary is called Virgin of virgins.

II. Having offered to Mary the repeated expression of our admiring love, let us think of the special obligation to purity which our character as Christians imposes upon us. We are members of Christ; we are the temples of the Holy Ghost; we are not our own, but are bought with a price, and

if we are guilty of impurity we commit a double sin of injustice and profanation. This is not our own reasoning, but that of the Apostle St. Paul (1 Cor. vi. 15, etc.).

The priest's vow of virginity is bound up with his ordination ; that of the religious with his profession. Thus, without reaching the sublime perfection of Mary, we may reproduce some features of it, and thus, like our dear Mother, we have special obligations to holiness. Let us be proud of them, and faithful to them.

COLLOQUY.

Let us add to our tribute of reverent admiration a generous resolution of vowing to purity the homage of our affection, and then we may expect, through the intercession of our dear Mother, the fulfilment of our desires. *Tota pulchra es, O Maria* —Thou art all fair, O Mary. Thou shalt present us to Jesus, whom virgins follow whithersoever He goeth.

Jesu corona virginum.
Jesus, the virgins' crown.

THIRTY-NINTH SATURDAY : THE FORTITUDE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In this age of moral weakness we may well meditate on the value of fortitude, and show that so precious a virtue may become an ornament of our own souls. We shall consider—(1) the *virtue of fortitude* and its beauty ; (2) its perfection in the *Queen of Martyrs* ; (3) the *means of obtaining it.*

MEDITATION.

"Mulierem fortem quis inveniet? Procul et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus"—Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the utmost coasts is the price of her (Prov. xxxi. 10).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine we see Calvary, and Mary beneath the Cross of the dying Jesus.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask earnestly through Mary for the virtue of fortitude.

I. Fortitude and its Beauty.

I. Fortitude is a cardinal virtue, which enables us to overcome all difficulties in fulfilling the duties imposed upon us. It is free from rashness as from fear, ready to endure as to act, to defend itself against the attacks of enemies as to assume the offensive; it follows the straight line of the most sublime duty. It shines in all its glory in dangers, when life is at stake, and therefore is the special virtue of the martyrs. This virtue has a special beauty in man, who is naturally weak, and physically incapable of overcoming opposition: in him it is truly the victory of the vanquished, triumph in the midst of disaster.

II. Let us have a great admiration for the man who is endowed with moral fortitude. The desire for this virtue will dispose us to acquire it and develop it in ourselves.

II. The Queen of Martyrs.

I. Let us fix our attention on Mary and her unfailing constancy during the time of Our Lord's

passion. Let us remember who she is—a virgin brought up far from the crowd and the turmoil of men, admirable in her modesty, living a life of holy retirement. Already men have begun to be afraid to speak openly of Jesus, because they fear the Jews. We have reached the Feast of the Pasch; the crowd is immense, and the scene is full of terror. To go to the side of Jesus is at this moment to run into serious danger. And through all this Mary is so united to her Son that she feels as if she herself were condemned by the judgment which sentences Him to suffer death on the Cross. Judge now what her fortitude must be, as you see her through those hours of terrible grief, rising superior to all fear for herself while she fulfils all the duties of the most loving of mothers. She knows how to endure as well as to act. Noble in her courage, she pushes her way through the crowd, climbs the hill of Calvary, and takes her place at the foot of the Cross. Noble in her patience, she stands unwavering, and utters neither complaints nor reproaches: noble in her patience, she has neither hatred nor anger for her persecutors; noble in her acts, she gives her life and her Son's life for them. Noble in her patience, she accepts from God the chalice, the full chalice, of the Passion; noble in her acts, she unites herself to God to complete the sacrifice of her Son. Noble in her patience, she remains for three hours erect and silent on Calvary; noble in her acts, she ceases not to offer her sacrifice. Noble in her patience, she accepts the separation from her Son, even from His mortal remains; noble in her acts, she helps to lay His body in the tomb.

II. O Mother of God, and our Mother, if men would only spare time to think of thee and thy sufferings, their hearts would be melted at the spectacle. Queen of Martyrs, pray for us !

III. The Means of obtaining Fortitude.

I. The beauty of fortitude and the example of our dear Mother inspire us with a holy ambition to become valiant ourselves, and to give to the infused virtue of fortitude the facility of an acquired habit. We can all acquire this virtue if we will. What are the means to be employed ?

1. Prayer—fervent, continual prayer.

2. A careful meditation on the passion of Christ and the dolours of Mary.

3. The exercise of our will. We can train it to do what will cost us something ; we can accustom it to persevere, even in little things. How useful from this point of view are the little sacrifices we make every day—our voluntary renunciation of some special pleasures !

4. Above all, victory over *the present difficulty*. We are all struggling against some difficulty or other ; it may be interior or exterior ; it may be physical, or intellectual, or moral. That is to say, we all find ourselves confronted by a task which is not easy or pleasant. If we give in, we open the way to fresh defeats. If we make up our minds to overcome, victory is sure, and will bring us greater triumphs in the future. Yes, this struggle against present difficulty is a call of God to us to conquer some enemy or to overcome some obstacle. And this victory, which God makes possible for us,

will nerve us to greater effort for which we have as yet neither the courage nor the aptitude.

II. Let us begin at once ; instead of giving up the struggle, let us lift up our heads, full of confidence in God. What seems now to be a cause of discouragement will really serve to harden us for the fight. It is in this sense that the Fathers explain the words of Our Lord to St. Paul : " My grace is sufficient for thee ; for power is made perfect in infirmity " (2 Cor. xii. 9).

If we are charged with the education of the young, let us take care to strengthen their characters by preparing them for struggle and sacrifice.

COLLOQUY.

Let us offer to our sorrowful Mother that resolution which will please her best—to acquire, through her sufferings, and with her help, that fortitude which will keep us steady and unflinching in the dangers that beset us.

Stabat Mater Dolorosa.

FORTIETH SATURDAY : THE MEEKNESS AND PATIENCE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—It is useful to persuade men of the beauty and dignity of meekness and patience, and we shall consider these as—(1) the *virtues of the strong*, and (2) the *virtues of Mary :* and (3) we shall see *how they may be ours also.*

MEDITATION.

"*Fructus autem Spiritus est caritas, gaudium, pax, patientia*"—*The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience* (Gal. v. 22).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves Mary on Calvary, at the foot of the Cross.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may fully realize the charm of these virtues.

I. Meekness and Patience, Virtues of the Strong.

I. *Meekness* curbs the impetuosity of anger, patience prevents excess of sadness; the two virtues are made to support and control each other. Impatience provokes anger, and anger, by reaction, causes depression; without patience, meekness degenerates into mere apathy.

1. They are a *sign* of fortitude. Do they not show that we have overcome our passions and difficulties? According to an old proverb, the *meek* man is without inordinate affection. The *patient* man overcomes all obstacles. The man who is meek and patient is master of himself and the world. And this mastery is the more striking, as the causes of anger and sadness are the more numerous; they are *within ourselves*, in the diseases of the body and the infirmities of the mind, in vices of character and defects of will; they are *without us*, in men and their nature, in things and their combinations; in casual events, and in those which are intentionally caused; in time itself, which wears out men's constancy. The man

who is meek and strong cannot fail to overcome his enemies.

2. Moreover, they are a *cause* of fortitude. To the man who is possessed of these qualities they ensure a full possession of all the faculties he requires to deliberate on the best course to be pursued, to arrive at a just conclusion, and to give effect to his judgment. How many mistakes are committed, how much mischief is done, by hasty outbursts of anger! And how much our influence over others is increased by meekness and patience! Our own experience tells us that. But what is the explanation? It is that the man who is meek and patient never excites against himself the jealousy of the man whom he wishes to convince, and never humiliates the man whom he has beaten in argument; in taking care not to excite his neighbour, he leaves him the full exercise of his own judgment; he attracts other men by the beauty of his meekness and patience, and everyone loves to win his favour.

II. Let us add to all this that there is no happiness to be found in anger or sadness, while the meek and patient man enjoys not only the approval of his own conscience, but also the satisfaction of present success, and a foretaste of the happiness to come. How can we help admiring these virtues, and making up our minds to acquire them?

II. Meekness and Patience, Virtues of Mary.

I. 1. To show the excellence of these virtues in Mary, is it not enough to remember that meekness and humility were the special marks of Our Lord's

character ? and how could they be wanting in her who bore the closest resemblance to Jesus ?

2. Think of all the painful trials of Mary, from the birth of Jesus to His Crucifixion, and after that to her own assumption—flight, exile, the loss of Jesus, solitude, compassion, desolation, and the long waiting for Heaven. Did she ever give way to anger or despair ? No ; she was always calm and brave, always dignified and holy : that is how she appears to us in the Gospel.

3. This gentle patience is such a characteristic of Mary that no painter has ever failed to recognize it ; in every language she is called the *Sweet Virgin*, and this sweetness is the quality which attracts the hearts of men to the Mother of God.

II. Let us contemplate her meekness and patience in the various events of her life, and we cannot fail to admire her more and more.

And does not Mary continue to show her sweetness in Heaven ? Do we not show our belief in this by always having recourse to her in spite of our constant failings of all kinds ? Let us thank her for that quality which is so precious to us, and is always at our service.

III. The Acquisition of these Virtues.

I. If we have made up our minds to correspond to the grace which urges us to acquire these virtues of meekness and patience, let us see which is the best way to set about it.

1. First of all, let us examine ourselves, and see whether we possess any share of these virtues, and what faults we have to correct.

2. Let us not forget the duty of constant prayer.

3. Meekness is the daughter of humility, and patience is born of confidence in God. If we really believe in the providence of God, we look forward with hope to the future, and this will make patience easy in the present.

4. Let us study the beauty of these virtues, and the happy effects that follow from their possession; and, on the other hand, let us think how little we have ever done to deserve great favours from God or from men.

5. Let us remember this practical rule: We are strong when our passions are first awakened, but weak when they are let loose; it is much harder to overcome them when they have once got the better of us than to keep them under control before they are fully roused. Let us learn, when we are assailed by the impulses of passion, to resist them at once by making acts of virtue contrary to the evil passion which is to be resisted, or by turning our attention to some other object.

6. Let us make use of the particular examination, to strengthen our will, and overcome our enemies one after the other.

COLLOQUY.

Let us beg the Blessed Virgin to help us to imitate the meekness and patience of her Divine Son; and, in order to obtain that grace, let us conclude with the invocation, *O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria—O clement, O loving Mary, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

THIRD SECTION

THE GLORIES OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

FORTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE MORAL BEAUTY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—This meditation is naturally connected with those of the preceding section; we propose to study in it a first glory of Mary, the lovely spectacle of her moral beauty, and with a few strokes to sketch an image which will make a lasting impression on our minds and hearts.

The perfection of purity produces in Mary a wonderful unity of life; joy shines on her features, which are ennobled by past suffering bravely borne; and, lastly, the possession of that purity is secured from all danger of defilement.

MEDITATION.

"Cor meum et caro mea exsultaverunt in Deum vivum"—My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God (Ps. lxxxiii. 3).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Mary as the wonderful woman described in the Apocalypse as clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray God to increase our reverence for our Mother in Heaven, and to give us the grace to perfect ourselves after her example.

I. The Splendour of Purity.

I. Let us think what is meant by *Divine purity*. It is not enough to look upon it merely as freedom from sin; Divine purity is that complete unity of the Divine Being which is such that all in Him is God; that God perfectly understands Himself by an act which is His very essence; that God loves Himself with a perfect love, which is also His own essence; that God knows all things by His own essential intuition; that He finds in Himself all His reason for loving them. In other words, the purity of God is the simple identity of His Divine Being, His knowledge and His love; He exists, and understands, and loves, by nothing else than His Divine essence. It justifies us in saying that God is only God, He knows only God, He loves only God, and at the same time that He is all that is good, He knows all, He loves all goodness.

How shall I show my adoration and gratitude for the absolute perfection and infinite goodness of God, who has shown so much love for a creature like me, without any desert of my own?

The Purity of the Blessed Virgin.—Every creature will necessarily always remain at an infinite distance from this Divine unity. It is always possible to conceive a less indirect and less inadequate knowledge of God, and a more complete love for Him than any knowledge or love found in any creature.

But the actual purity of creatures should be made to draw nearer to this Divine model. Such, then, in the moral order, is the unity which makes a creature wholly belong to God, and wholly tend

towards God ; it is the effectual attraction of the finite towards the infinite. The more we appear to be belongings of God, the purer we are. Our elevation to the supernatural order gives rise to a purity more excellent than we could attain by the unaided forces of our nature. We see this purity in its highest degree in the humanity of Our Lord. Left to itself, this human nature of ours would have remained inferior to the Angels, and consequently less pure than they. But it is taken by the Word of God ; it exists only for God ; its very acts are the acts of a Divine person. Here, then, we have complete purity.

Mary in her purity was inferior only to her Divine Son. By the grace of the Divine maternity her body and all the powers of her physical life are employed for a Divine purpose. No other creature could thus have placed at the service of God, not only its acts, but its very nature and substance. Add to this prerogative an intelligence always directed to God, passions in perfect subjection, and all inclinations following the superior appetite ; give to this appetite in its craving for God all the natural and supernatural intensity with which the Mother of God was endowed, and you have a feeble idea of the purity of Mary.

II. *Our own Purification.*—The means thereto are—

1. To put away all inferior tastes and attachments and intentions, to practise self-denial and strive to obtain victory over our passions, to resist all influences except those of our higher faculties. These influences which are to be resisted may be exterior, such as success or failure ; or

interior, such as the various impulses to which we are subject.

2. To offer ourselves entirely to God—our bodies, our souls, our intentions, our actions—more earnestly and completely than we have hitherto done.

To what a high degree of purity the Saints have risen! St. Bernard went so far as to say that everything was irksome to him upon which he did not see written the name of Jesus; and St. Francis of Sales exclaimed: "Oh, if I knew but one fibre of my heart that was not all God's, I would instantly tear it out—yes, let my heart itself be torn out if I do not use it wholly in loving God."

Let us not be afraid that this singleness of thought and love will make us hard and cold. We cannot love another person except by identifying him with ourselves or with God, with whom we are already united. Will our love be less real or less intense because it is reflected on God, and not on ourselves? Let us consider how tender was the love of Jesus and the Saints.

Have we taken only a few steps along this path of purity and singleness of intention?

II. The Brightness of Joy and the Heroism of Suffering.

I. 1. Without joy or sorrow, moral beauty would seem to be without life or soul. Without joy it would seem to be neither modelled after God nor approved by Him; without sorrow, how should it show its nobility and strength? God is infinitely holy and infinitely happy: virtue comes from God,

and imitates His perfections. Can it reflect His holiness without reflecting His happiness? But if, on the other hand, duty were all pleasure, what would there be to ensure nobleness of intentions in a fallible creature, or to show that strength which the holiness of God derives from its own infinity? Ever since the Fall of Adam there has been in men a war of contrary inclinations, and therefore virtue must show by sacrifice that it is inspired by some higher motive than mere taste or selfish interest. Since there are wicked men, they must serve to render more conspicuous the righteousness of the good; suffering is the crucible from which human virtue comes out refined; the malice and cruelty of the wicked prepare the martyr's laurels.

The mysterious association of joy and sorrow appeared in the highest degree in the soul of Our Lord; He had always before Him the sight of God and the sight of the Cross, the beatific vision and the prospect of the most terrible sufferings. During the whole of His mortal life he tasted all the joys of Heaven and all the pains of earth. Henceforth there is a new reason why moral beauty should demand this mixture of joy and sorrow; it cannot be complete unless it resemble that of Jesus Christ.

2. This is the reason why Mary's joys and sorrows were greater than those of any other mortal. Being exempt from original sin and concupiscence, she sees the merit and beauty of all her actions enhanced by suffering, and her life must more than any other be conformed to that of Jesus Christ. The Saints have long admired in the Mother of God the union of supreme suffering and

supreme consolation. Who possessed Jesus more fully than she did? Who suffered more than she for His sake, from the time of the prophecy of Simeon? What faith was more lively than Mary's, or more able to make up for the loss of vision here below? Who longed for Heaven as the Mother of God did? Who tasted as fully as she the full fruits of the Redemption, or wept as she did over the loss of souls? Only such a love as hers could enable her to drain the cup of delights and the chalice of all sufferings.

II. This union of suffering and consolation is met with in the lives of the Saints. St. Paul tells us his own experience: "*Sicut abundant passiones Christi in nobis: ita et per Christum abundat consolatio nostra. . . . Superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione nostra*"—As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. . . . I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation (2 Cor. i. 5, vii. 4). The Saints have derived their consolation from God and Heaven, even while they have suffered from the world and men.

Let us not be surprised if we have to pass through painful trials; let us, like St. Paul, profess ourselves ready "both to be brought low, and to abound; both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. iv. 12). But if we desire that the peace of God be always with us, let us strive by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, to be united to God, who is the principle of all good, and to be detached from the love of all creatures, whose imperfection is the principle of all evil.

III. Mary's Indefectible Purity.

I. The holiness of God implies the eternal possession of all good. Moral beauty needs the crown of perseverance. Mary was so filled with the grace of God that she had a persevering constancy in all virtue as firm as that of the Angels or the blessed in Heaven. And this was required by the dignity of her position, for it would be more possible for an Angel to fall from grace than for the Mother of God, the Spouse of the Word. Thus, the purity of Mary, inferior only to that of the Word, attains the summit of created purity.

II. Let us contrast our own instability with the constancy of Mary, and try by humility, faith, and prayer to make ourselves more like her.

COLLOQUY.

Let us gaze in silent reverence on the beauty of Mary, that the contemplation of her holiness may be an incentive to purity in ourselves, and let us invoke her with those words of the hymn. *Vitam præsta puram—Keep our lives all pure.*

FORTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS INCORRUPTIBILITY OF THE BODY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Plan of the Meditation.—We shall now pass, after some general reflections, from the contemplation of our Mother to ourselves, and consider—(1) *death and corruption;* (2) the *preservation of the body of the Mother of God;* (3) *our own future freedom* from corruption.

MEDITATION.

"*Non dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem*" —*Thou wilt not give thy holy one to see corruption* (Ps. xv. 10).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Mary at the summit of glory in Heaven.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to grow in admiration of Mary, and to prepare ourselves by a holy life for the incorruption of the life to come.

I. Death and Corruption.

I. 1. Death, that painful separation of body and soul, is not necessarily void of merit or glory. Jesus Christ Himself has shown us how death and defeat may be swallowed up in victory. Splendid is the triumph of the martyr who sacrifices his life to the eternal truth; complete is the Christian's victory over the present life, when he leaves it without regret, full of love for his Saviour, whom he imitates in dying, joyful at the prospect of a future life overflowing with promises fulfilled, and blessing God, whose decree he accepts with delight; magnificent in its fruits is his victory who sacrifices himself for his fellow-men, his country, or the Church.

All these glories were united in the death of Jesus Christ. No death was more voluntary, more painful, more noble, more fruitful in blessings. He wished to die for love of His Father; He offered in dying the perpetual sacrifice which alone is worthy of God, to whom His death gave infinite

glory, while to the whole world He was deliverance and salvation.

2. But death is followed by a complete destruction of the body, a humiliation which is the penalty of sin, without merit or glory.

II. Let us contemplate the end that awaits us all.

1. *We shall die.* Let us not die without glory. Let us die without regret for the life we are leaving, united to Jesus Christ, with our eyes fixed on the life on which we are entering, giving edification even in death itself. The gladiators of old endeavoured to die with dignity before the people who greeted their agony with applause; the philosophers died with a proud indifference; let our death be that of sincere, humble Christians.

2. *Our bodies shall return to dust.* Let us accept the penalty which we have only too well deserved. The punishment is lessened by the conviction of faith that if our poor earthly body perishes, it is only in order that it may be raised glorious and worthy of Heaven. "It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 42-44).

II. The Death and Incorruptibility of the Mother of God.

I. There is a certain doubt about the death of Mary, which we shall not attempt to solve here. But if Mary died, as is most probable, her death was, after the death of Jesus, the most beautiful and glorious of all. She died not only with love, but for love. Preceded by a martyrdom full of

merit and blessing to us all, the end of her earthly existence bore the closest resemblance to the death of Jesus, and was so sweet and peaceful that it has been called by the special name of the *Dormition*.

II. Catholic writers have had doubts as to the fact of Mary's death, but none has ever doubted her preservation from corruption. All have asserted it without hesitation, and have given four reasons for their belief.

1. The *legal* reason. Corruption follows death, inasmuch as death is the penalty of sin. But Mary, being exempt from all stain of sin, had no need to pass through death as a punishment.

2. The *theological* reason. The Divine maternity, in consecrating the flesh of Mary, imprinted upon it the stamp of immortality. Can we possibly suppose that a body thus sanctified by the Divinity could be reduced to corruption? No; far from needing to be put out of sight, and becoming a spectacle repulsive to the senses, it was destined to delight the eyes of the Angels and the elect, and to shine among the innumerable wonders of Heaven. This preservation was a debt of gratitude and honour which the Divine Word wished to pay to His Mother.

3. The *providential* reason. Mary, as we shall see, is the Mother of Grace, and of all the fruits of grace. Shall not she, who dispenses them to others, enjoy them herself in a special and privileged manner? Among these fruits of grace is included the incorruptibility of the body. How could Mary, united to the principle of all incorruptibility, who came down into her womb to give

Himself through her to all mankind, ever have been liable to corruption? Surely such a thing would be in manifest contradiction with the whole of the Divine plan.

4. The reason of *analogy*. (1) Mary was redeemed in a more excellent manner than the rest of mankind, and had a right to participate more fully in the incorruptibility of the body of Christ. (2) God directed that the ancient tabernacle should be made of the wood of a tree which is said to be incorruptible. The tabernacle was only a figure of Mary, and it is reasonable to suppose that God would take as much care for the preservation of the living tabernacle which was destined for His Son. (3) God miraculously preserved the virginity of Mary; pure and intact, her body is exempt from the law of corruption.

III. Let us understand well the certainty of this privilege of Mary. Since first the attention of the Fathers of the Church was drawn to the question, all have proclaimed with Andrew of Crete: "As the womb of the Blessed Virgin was preserved intact in her maternity, so on her death her flesh could not see corruption" (Ὡς γὰρ τικτούσης ἡ νηδὺς οὐ διέφθαρτο, οὕτω θανούσης ἡ σὰρξ οὐ διόλωλε). No doctor has ever doubted this immunity. Catholic piety, says St. Augustine, would be shocked at the suggestion that the body of Mary could become the food of worms. This privilege, which is much more firmly established than the Assumption, is not a mere congruity, but a necessity of convenience. The anticipated resurrection is less essential for the honour of Mary, provided that her holy remains lie incorrupt, awaiting her

glorious awakening. At the most it is but the delay of a few moments, for centuries are but as seconds in the eyes of God, and in comparison with eternity.

III. Our Immunity from Corruption.

I. Why does our body return to dust ?

1. Because it is a principle of sin.

2. Because its desires keep it far from God : none of its longings raises it towards the source of incorruptibility ; it is inclined to the earth ; naturally it falls, and is absorbed by the earth.

3. Above all, because it is infected with the concupiscence of the flesh. In indulgence of the lower appetites is found the principle of corruption. This connection between corruption and sensual pleasure was so strongly impressed on the early Christians that an ancient legend asserted the incorruptibility of the body of St. John, the Virgin Apostle.

II. Let us prepare ourselves for a glorious resurrection from the corruption of the grave by a life free from sin ; let us turn to God without delay, and above all resist all the temptations of the flesh.

COLLOQUY.

Let us recall the striking words of St. Paul, who, in contrast with the depravity of those who set their affections on things of the earth, points out to us the Christian ideal : " Our conversation is in Heaven " (Phil. iii. 20). Let us set this ideal

before us, and pray that through the intercession of Mary we may be enabled to realize it.

Ave Maria.
Hail Mary.

FORTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE ESSENTIAL GLORY OF THE SOUL OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—While we rejoice in the triumph of our Mother, let us learn from her to aim at something higher than the worldly success which is the object of most men's desires, but which few succeed in attaining. We shall consider the *essential happiness* which the soul of Mary finds—(1) *in God;* (2) *through Jesus Christ.*

MEDITATION.

"Exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo"—My Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour (St. Luke i. 47).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the glory of Heaven, in which Mary occupies the next place to the throne of Jesus.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may realize the essential happiness of the soul of Mary, in order that we may seek all our happiness in God.

I. MARY'S HAPPINESS IN GOD.

I. Who can describe what passed in the soul of Mary, the most perfect of all pure creatures, when it took its flight to God, to enter into possession of

infinite bliss! O joy supreme, ever complete and ever new! joy which ever satisfies, and never tires! joy too great to be possible naturally to any but God! joy of God, which by an ineffable mystery becomes the joy of man elevated into the region of the supernatural! This exhaustless fountain of truth and love pours all its streams into the heart of Mary; or, rather, as the heart is too small to contain them, Mary's soul is submerged beneath them. Are we not told that every faithful servant enters into the joy of his Lord?

Let us contemplate this beautiful spectacle for a time in silence, and then put our whole hearts into the hymn of congratulation to Mary: *Regina cæli, lætare, alleluia*—Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

II. We also are called upon to rejoice in God. From Him we have our being, and in spite of our insignificance, He condescends to invite us to a place in His kingdom. All we have we have received from Him, to Him we look for all we have still to receive, and we shall receive all if only we will be entirely His.

How well the Saints have said, "My God and my all!" Have we fathomed the meaning of this favourite ejaculation of St. Francis of Assisi? God is my all, for He is all the good that is in me, all the good that is around me. Nothing is good except in so far as it is like God. To be truly my all, it is only necessary that He should be freely chosen by me. Let us choose Him; why should we hesitate to rise above the love of creatures, to rise to God Himself? We are His, according to the measure of our charity.

II. Mary's Happiness through Jesus Christ.

I. 1. What a joy it is for any mother to see her son again! What a joy to see him crowned with glory and happiness! What a joy to see him when he invites her to share his happiness and glory! But what shall we say of the reunion of the best of mothers with the best of sons? We cannot realize to the full the bliss of the meeting of Jesus and Mary in Heaven. But at least we can understand enough to fill us with devotion to Jesus and Mary.

2. When Mary sees God, she sees her Son also. She sees His Divine nature, in the felicity of which she is plunged, and she knows His human nature, the felicity of which augments her essential happiness.

(1) She is plunged into the happiness of the Divine Nature. We may well use the language of Bossuet to describe the sublime reciprocation of benefits: Mary gave her Son a place in her bosom and in her cottage; in return He gives her a place in His palace, and in the bosom of His divinity. He humbled Himself to her human nature; now He raises her to Himself. She fed Him with her milk, and afterwards with her bread; now He in return is to feed her at the marriage feast, where she is seated in the first place among the elect. With what heavenly food He feeds her! with what heavenly drink he quenches her thirst!

(2) On the other hand, there is displayed before her eyes, as before all the Saints, the glory of Christ's human nature; but she sees more than they; she sees not only her King, her Redeemer,

but also her own work. How much more intimate is her communication in the happiness of Christ!

II. 1. In spite of the great distance which separates us from the Mother of God, a similar essential reward is promised to us. In return for the humble services that He condescends to accept from our hands, the Lord of all things will also serve us in His kingdom, as He has told us in the gospel: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and, passing, will minister unto them" (St. Luke xii. 37).

2. What happiness it is for us to belong to God through Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is our glory and our honour.

3. In the present life we can receive Him in Holy Communion, and live of His life by supernatural grace; and, while sanctifying ourselves as His members, we entertain Himself.

4. The Christian is another Christ. Every soul saved by our zeal ensures us a share in that joy which Mary feels at the sight of her Divine Son, her own work.

COLLOQUY.

Let us rejoice with Mary in the eternal glory she enjoys, and through her let us offer our praises to God for the sublime rewards He has destined for us. Let us ask Mary to obtain for us the grace to lead a life a little less unworthy of our high vocation.

Ave Maria.
Hail Mary.

FORTY-FOURTH SATURDAY: THE PERFECT GLORY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD IN SOUL AND BODY.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—Let us echo the glorious antiphon which the Church sings in the little Office of the Blessed Virgin, "Mary is taken up into Heaven." She is taken up, body as well as soul. We shall devote this meditation to the triumph of Mary in her Assumption, which none of the faithful doubt, and which many hope to see one day defined as an article of faith; and we shall consider—(1) the *theological proofs* of the Assumption; (2) the *incomparable honour* done to Mary; and (3) the *practical conclusions* we should draw for ourselves.

MEDITATION.

"Et apertum est templum Dei in cœlo, et visa est arca testamenti ejus in templo ejus"—And the temple of God was opened in Heaven, and the ark of His testament was seen in His temple (Apoc. xi. 19).

First Prelude.—Let us contemplate Mary rising to Heaven with her glorious body, and the Angels leading her up to the throne of God and of her Son Jesus.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for grace to realize the inestimable happiness of Mary, and prepare ourselves by a holy life one day to share that happiness with her.

I. THE PROOFS.

I. 1. The great proof of the fact of the Assumption of Mary is found in the unanimous consent

with which the whole Church has for centuries celebrated this great feast. For more than a thousand years the whole Christian world has in the most solemn manner given praise to God that, not content with filling the soul of Mary with glory, He has enabled her body also, by an anticipated resurrection, to share in the pure joys of Paradise. Can we suppose that this manifestation is made without good reason? Can we doubt that the concept of Mary, as God bequeathed it to His Church, included also her bodily assumption?

2. There are various theological reasons which support our belief:

(1) In that passage of the Book of Genesis which is called the proto-evangel, we read that God said He would put enmities between the woman and the devil, between her seed and his seed. Would the victory be complete if the resurrection of Mary were delayed? She was liable to suffer death, as her Son also had died, but death could have no lasting dominion over her. It was necessary that she should escape from the grasp of death as soon as she had been seized by it, and that she should show herself restored to freedom at the moment when she seemed to be reduced to slavery.

(2) St. John, in the Apocalypse, represents the Church under the figure of Mary. Would he have sought in death wherewith to depict the brightness of life? Does she show him nothing but a cold, lifeless body? Does he not, on the contrary, represent her as living and triumphant in Heaven—her to whom he gives the sun for her clothing, and twelve stars for her crown?

(3) We have seen that the Mother of God was certainly preserved from the corruption of the grave; and is there not a close and almost necessary connection between incorruptibility and an anticipated resurrection? Is not this the reasoning of St. Peter in the words he uses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? "Whom God raised up, having loosed the sorrows of hell, as it was impossible that He should be holden by it, for David saith concerning Him, Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption" (Acts ii. 24-27).

(4) Tradition shows us a new Eve by the side of a new Adam; but if Mary were not, body and soul, in Heaven, we should seek her in vain, this living Eve by the side of the new Adam, full of life and glory.

(5) It was by means of her body that Mary became the Mother of God, that she brought forth and nourished the Saviour. Is it possible, then, that that body could be long excluded from glory?

(6) Finally, as Spouse of the Word (for we shall see later that Mary is more properly called Spouse of the Word than Spouse of the Holy Ghost) she must live in the company of her heavenly Bridegroom; and as the perfect model of Christians, she must show in her person what we have to hope for in eternity.

II. If we fully understand the reasons for this additional and magnificent privilege, we shall offer to our dear Mother the homage of our devotion with increased earnestness and fervour,

II. The Incomparable Honour of the Assumption.

I. 1. It is a small thing for the body of Mary to return to life ; it must be clothed in beauty and radiance worthy of its immortality, worthy of a soul raised to the happiness of God. How shall we fittingly extol the magnificent prerogatives of that body which, being matter, yet rises above the nature of matter, ignores its weight, overcomes all its resistance, defies all obstacles, and soars swiftly beyond the visible worlds, encompassed with pure delights, and shining with celestial brightness ?

2. Now let us contemplate Mary as she is, in all her beauty and her heavenly peace. There is no fear now that possession may mar the purity of her intention. The intention, being from God, and conformable to His will, tends entirely to Him.

The soul has no longer to wait for the completion of its essential felicity. Happy in itself, it is equally so in all the members of the body which was its instrument.

3. It is an honour to share this privilege with Jesus Christ. In Heaven there are two perfect human beings, two human hearts which fully understand one another, which love one another, which thrill with the holiest joy—the Heart of Jesus and the heart of His Mother.

II. Let us admire the perfection of the picture which is sketched in the first Book of Holy Scripture. A woman is announced with her Son, and ages afterwards we recognize her as a humble virgin with a child in her arms, discovered by the

poor shepherds, receiving the presents of the wise men, pursued by the cruel hate of Herod ; then, as the afflicted Mother, standing by the Cross on which her Son hung dying ; and, last of all, as the glorious Queen, whom her Son associates with Himself in His victory.

Let us delight to contemplate the glory and happiness of Mary, and learn that the trials and humiliations of this life are the preparation for a glorious triumph in the life to come.

III. Practical Conclusions.

I. What happiness for the body of Mary to be raised from the earth which should have covered and absorbed it ! Our bodies, retained by their weight, cannot escape from the grave ; but at least we can give them freedom from earthly desires. Oh, these desires ! They come to us, at first, like the body itself, with all the grace and freshness of youth ; but woe to him who follows them blindly ! They lead us into the mire of degradation and misery. On the contrary, if we resist them, if we turn our backs upon them, and set our affections on things above, these same temptations are a cause of merit and happiness, and, instead of the vain pleasures of the earth, we feel already a foretaste of the bliss of Heaven ; and at the last hour of our lives we shall leave everything earthly behind us without regret.

II. Let us remember this great truth : either the soul raises the body to happiness, or the body drags down the soul to perdition. If we follow the instincts of the body, they are fatal to both

soul and body, for the flames of hell will reach the soul also. If the body is brought under subjection, it follows the soul along the road of duty, painful sometimes, but leading to eternal happiness.

Now is the time to choose : shall we join those sinners who rush headlong to ruin, or those lukewarm Christians who expose themselves to danger, or the Saints who walk along the safe path to glory ?

COLLOQUY.

Let us rejoice with Mary, and beg her intercession with her Son and the Eternal Father, that our souls may obtain that complete mastery over the senses which ensures us a life of honour here, and eternal happiness hereafter.

" *Ne mens gravata crimine,*
Vitæ sit exsul munere,
Dum nil perenne cogitat,
Seseque culpis illigat.
Cœleste pulset ostium,
Vitale tollat præmium :
Vitemus omne noxium,
Purgemus omne pessimum."

" Keep Thou our souls from schemes of crime,
Nor guilt remorseful let them know,
Nor thinking but of things of time
Into eternal darkness go.
Teach us to knock at Heaven's high door,
Teach us the prize of life to win,
Teach us all evil to abhor,
And purify ourselves within."

(*From the hymn for Sunday at Vespers.*)

FORTY-FIFTH SATURDAY: THE TRIUMPHS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD OVER HELL, AND IN THE WORLD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—After contemplating the more essential victories which ensure to Mary eternal glory of soul and body, we shall consider the other victories which perfect her triumph—namely, her victory (1) *over hell;* (2) *over heresy;* (3) *over the hearts of men.*

MEDITATION.

"Pulchra es, amica mea; suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem; terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata"—Thou art beautiful, O my love; sweet and comely as Jerusalem; terrible as an army set in array (Cant. vi. 3).

First Prelude.—Let us contemplate Mary as she is represented in paintings of the Immaculate Conception, with the demon writhing impotently under her feet.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for grace to imitate the Blessed Virgin in her victories, and thus prepare for her another glorious triumph in ourselves.

I. THE TRIUMPH OVER HELL.

I. We have already meditated on the first great triumph of Mary in her Immaculate Conception. This was the signal for more decisive victories, interior and exterior.

1. *Interior Victories.*—The moral triumph of Mary was absolutely complete: she was incapable of sin, and proof against temptation. The devil

never succeeded in tarnishing the beauty of the soul of the Mother of God. He was never able to touch her within. This is the moral triumph of Mary.

2. *Exterior Victories.*—The devil is completely defeated. He is cunning, he is strong, he is proud ; but his schemes have failed ; he has not known the Divine maternity of Mary and the plan of Redemption. This ignorance has led him to that foolish persecution of Jesus Christ which was to result in the victory over hell. The power of the devil is turned against himself ; his apparent success was his defeat. Mary, with her Son, seemed to be conquered on Calvary, but her Son was victorious, and she shares His triumph. Jesus redeemed mankind, and Mary became the mediatress of grace. Humiliated in every soul that escapes from him, the devil will see his pride finally confounded at the Last Judgment. There Mary will appear with her Son, enriched with the spoils of hell ; the devil has been powerless against her, and he will have to submit to the shame of hearing his defeat proclaimed before the whole world.

II. We are called upon to win another victory under the protection of Mary. The devil is the author of all evil. Our victory over moral evil consists in banishing it from our hearts, in refusing to have anything to do with it ; our triumph over physical evil is in making use of physical suffering in order to purify ourselves and acquire merits so that we may obtain eternal glory.

Oh, if we could only fix these thoughts deeply in our hearts ! All these instigations to what is evil or less good, all these temptations to luxury,

anger, envy, and jealousy ; all these invitations to sloth or negligence, are so many devices of the enemy, so many open or concealed attacks. The full victory belongs to the man who, master of himself, and unseduced by bad example, refuses to listen to the voice of passion or the devil, and resolutely throws off the yoke of sin. "Know you not," says St. Paul (Rom. vi. 16), "that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin, unto death, or of obedience, unto justice?" If we yield ourselves to obey the devil, we become his servants, and the end of that service is death.

On the other hand, if we turn all the trials and troubles of this life to our spiritual advantage, we follow the example of Jesus and Mary, and change defeat into victory.

Let us examine ourselves as to our conduct and our spiritual progress, and make good resolutions of perseverance.

II. The Triumph over Heresy.

I. 1. The world is divided into believers and unbelievers. Unbelievers, who are strangers to the religion of Christ, not knowing Mary, cannot be said to attack her ; it is amongst the false disciples of Our Lord that Mary has her most desperate enemies. These false disciples are the heretics. Let us see how Mary has overcome them.

2. The spirit of falsehood and error has vainly endeavoured to lessen the dignity of Mary in the eyes of the world. It denied her principal title of

Mother of God, and met with a crushing defeat at the Council of Ephesus. In vain it denied her perpetual virginity; the Church throughout the world proclaims the triple perfection of her virginity before, during, and after her maternity. The great enemy of Mary succeeded for a time, by one specious pretext or another, in persuading a few doctors and Saints to think it possible that Mary had been for an instant under his yoke. But the dogma of the Immaculate Conception came to destroy their futile arguments. He prompted Protestants and Jansenists, under the mask of false zeal for the honour of Jesus Christ, to pretend that devotion to Mary infringed upon the rights of her Son. But all in vain; Mary Immaculate shines like the brightest star in the firmament of the Church, uniting the dignity of the Mother of God with the grace and purity of the Virgin of virgins, and receiving the homage of the whole world.

II. Let us take delight in proclaiming the glories of Mary, and let us, too, win a triumph over heresy by avoiding everything that is contaminated by its spirit. Let our faith be enlightened, but at the same time simple and childlike.

III. The Triumph over the Hearts of Men.

I. The greatest exterior glory of Mary is her triumph in and over the hearts of men.

1. The triumphs *in* the hearts of men by the honours she receives, and the love that is shown to her.

(1) How universal is this display of love! Who

shall number the churches erected in Mary's honour, the places of pilgrimage, the books written to defend her prerogatives or to spread devotion to her, the sermons preached to celebrate her praises? Instead of growing less, her honours increase as the ages roll by. Instead of the poor fresco of the catacombs, in which Mary is presented as an example to virgins, we have now the magnificent statue of the Immaculate Conception, which on its triumphal column dominates the eternal city of Rome.

(2) More magnificent still than this exterior splendour is the indescribable devotion which the Saints have shown her. What a brilliant aureole is formed around Mary by the most shining lights of the Church—St. Ephrem, the great doctor of the Syrian Church; St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, the great doctors of the Latin Church; St. Justin, St. Iræneus, St. Epiphanius, St. Cyril, and, in a word, all the most glorious Saints of the Greek Church! How St. Bernard loved her, St. Anselm, and all the most illustrious representatives of theological science in the Middle Ages and in later times! How St. Alphonsus loved her, and the young Saints Stanislaus and John Berchmans! and so many others whose whole lives were full of devotion to Mary! What eloquence there is in the simple story of St. Teresa, related by herself! When she lost her mother in her youth, she prayed the Queen of Heaven to take her mother's place. Truly all the Saints have loved and revered Mary as their Mother.

2. And what triumphs has she won *over* the hearts of men by the conversion and sanctification

of souls! At the name of Mary, how many hardened sinners have submitted themselves to grace! How many, who have resisted all other attempts at persuasion, have yielded to a Hail Mary, said before them or with them! Has not the simple wearing of a medal more than once sufficed to obtain for a sinner the all-prevailing intercession of the Mother of Mercy?

Have not the Saints assured us that Mary was the patroness of their sanctity, and that devotion to her was the straight road to perfection?

II. Whatever be our needs, let us have recourse to Mary with full confidence, whether to receive new spiritual life, or to perfect ourselves in virtue.

COLLOQUY.

Let us pray Mary to obtain for us a complete victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to accept the filial devotion of our hearts.

Ave Maria.

FORTY-SIXTH SATURDAY: THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL MATERNITY.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The sublimity and sweetness of the subject require a fervent prayer that we may make a specially fruitful meditation. As early as the fourth century we find St. Epiphanius calling Mary the Mother of all living. St. Augustine says that, as she co-operated by her charity in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became the spiritual mother of all who are members of the one head Christ Jesus; and in

our own days what Christian does not feel what Luther himself called the joy and consolation of having Mary for his true Mother? Reserving for the next meditation the effects of the special protection and intercession which that maternity gives us, we shall now try to realize its beauty, and to understand how well this title becomes the Blessed Virgin, and what duty it assigns to us in respect of our spiritual Mother. We shall consider—(1) the *nature and dignity of the spiritual maternity of Mary;* (2) *the proofs, the theological explanation, and the fitness* of that maternity; and (3) *our duties as children of Mary.*

MEDITATION.

"*Numquid oblivisci potest mulier infantem suum, ut non misereatur filio uteri sui?*"—*Can a mother forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb?* (Isa. xlix. 15).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves on Calvary; Jesus dies for us all; and Mary, uniting herself to His sacrifice, becomes our Mother.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may more fully understand the spiritual maternity of Mary, and have a truly filial love for her who is so truly our Mother.

I. The Nature and Dignity of this Maternity.

I. 1. *The Nature of this Maternity.*—The spiritual maternity of Mary is a Divine privilege, granted to Mary and to men, whereby the Mother of God is constituted the Mother of all mankind.

(1) As the Mother of Him who merited for us and conferred upon us every grace, Mary already exercises an indirect influence upon the grace or the supernatural life of all men. And this influence is so much more deserving of recognition because Mary was not a blind instrument in the hands of God, but she formally consented to bring the Saviour into the world. She gave Him to us twice: once in the mystery of the Incarnation, when she consented to become the mother of Him whose name of Jesus symbolized His mission of redemption, and a second time in the mystery of the Cross, when she ratified His sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. Is not this equivalent to giving life twice to the world, bringing us forth faith spiritually and becoming our Mother?

(2) Again, she deserves the sweet name of Mother by the special affection for us with which her charity inspires her. The more we love God and Jesus Christ, the more we love our fellow-men. Look at the love of St. Paul for his brethren.

(3) How can we any longer doubt that Mary has adopted us for her children even as her Son has done?

(4) But all these considerations, beautiful and touching as they are, give us only a very imperfect idea of the spiritual maternity of Mary. Let us go further, and ask her to fulfil, in a spiritual sense, all the conditions involved in the true idea of maternity. What is it to be a mother? It is to take of one's own substance, and to form in one's own likeness another being to whom one gives the sweet name of "child." Mary, then, will be really, and in the fullest meaning of the words, the

spiritual mother of men if she communicates to us that higher life with which she is so plentifully endowed, and thereby makes us more like herself.

2. *The Dignity of this Maternity.*—If it is honourable and glorious in itself to be a mother, how far beyond all human maternity is this maternity of Mary! (1) The life which Mary communicates to us is infinitely superior to all natural life. (2) Mary's work is more sublime, because it is fully conscious and voluntary. The ordinary mother does not know what will be the result of her child-bearing, but Mary knew and desired that of her maternity. (3) Her motherhood is more extensive and more lasting. In the physical order the child soon ceases to have recourse to his mother; as soon as he is weaned, he lives a separate life without her help. Spiritually our dependence remains undiminished; we need the support of our mother all our lives. The spiritual maternity implies the conferring of benefits constant and uninterrupted. (4) But the crowning glory of the maternity of Mary is that it associates her with the work of redemption, and entitles her to be called the co-redemptress of the world. To restore us to the life of grace is to redeem us from the slavery of sin. The part of the Blessed Virgin is, of course, secondary and subordinate to the principal action of Jesus Christ; nevertheless, no other honour is comparable to it, because the Redemption is the greatest of all works that have ever been accomplished.

II. 1. God has placed in our path through life men whose action has been spiritually profitable to us, and Christian parents so often have the

glory of giving birth, as it were, twice over to their children, as instruments chosen, first for the natural birth, and then for the spiritual regeneration of those who will bear their names on earth. To the action of the parents is added that of the priest, of the educator, of everyone who exercises any happy influence over our souls. These are our truest friends, our greatest benefactors. Let us see that we never fail in the gratitude we owe them.

2. If we are priests, or ministers of the Sacraments of God, let us be happy and proud to share in this spiritual parentage. This thought will encourage us in our labours ; it will preserve us from many dangers ; it will inspire us with a parental affection to those who are under our care ; and this reverential piety will keep us safe from inordinate affections.

3. If we are only simple Christians we have the power, by our prayers, our advice, and our good example, to participate in the glorious maternity of Mary. As St. Augustine says, speaking of holy virginity : " The virgins of Christ are also the mothers of Christ in the faith that operates by charity."

II. The Proof, the Theological Explanation and the Fitness of that Maternity.

I. 1. *The Proof.*—It is perfectly clear what was the tradition and the belief of the Church as to this spiritual maternity from the earliest times. The Saints of the first centuries represent to us Mary as the new Eve, Mother of all living, Mother of a better life than that which was communicated

to us by the wife of the first Adam. In Mary they see the type of the Church, in which and by which we all receive the grace of Christ. And as time goes on the weight of evidence increases. From the twelfth or thirteenth century what man has lived to illuminate the Church by his learning or piety who has not proclaimed the spiritual maternity of Mary? And in our own day one of the first lessons which every Christian mother gives to her child is that he has another mother in heaven.

2. *The Theological Explanation.*—(1) Let us transport ourselves in spirit to Calvary. A sacrifice of infinite value is being offered there, in which Jesus Christ is the priest and victim; we all are the fruit of it. The passion and death of Christ are the painful bringing forth of the human race to the spiritual life; that bringing forth is our redemption, and that spiritual life is modelled on the life of Christ. Christ draws it from Himself to give to us; the blood which streams from His wounds is a heavenly river of supernatural life. Jesus Christ becomes truly our Father.

We must remember that if the offering of sacrifice—that supreme act of public worship—requires a priest, to be the legitimate representative of the Christian people, accepted by God to act in their name, it receives an accidental perfection from the participation of the people. The sacrifice, offered in the name of the people, appears more complete if the people unite in it, if they make an offering of themselves. The people are the whole human race. Jesus Christ, by virtue of His humanity, can be our priest, while by His divinity He has a sure

access to God. Who shall represent the people by the side of the priest? What pure human being can do so? It must be Mary—Mary united to the victim, and taking in the immolation the same part which Abraham of old took in the sacrifice of Isaac. Mary is morally one with the victim, for He is a part of herself; she gave Him that body which was submitted to the torture, and an ineffable love unites her to her Son. Thanks to Mary, thanks to her affectionate compassion, the human race is struck in the person of its Chief, and immolated with Him. God receives the sacrifice of the God-Man and of men.

If Mary is in the Victim, she is not less in the act of sacrifice. Why did she give birth to this Victim? Why did she bring Him up? Why did she present Him in the temple? To prepare Him for the sacrifice when the time should come. Look at her now, not merely resigned to the will of God, but actively co-operating with it, as in the Incarnation. This is how Mary gives us our spiritual life.

And by what channel is this spiritual life to be conveyed to us? It flows from the Cross. Who is there to receive it? Mary again, always Mary. In the name of the human race she has taken part in the sacrifice; in its name and for its benefit she will receive the life which is to be the fruit of that sacrifice. All the virtue of the Cross passes first into the heart of Mary, to be poured out thence over the whole world. Thus is it that Mary communicates to us the spiritual life which she draws at the same time from Jesus Christ and from herself. Is she not, then, truly our Mother?

(2) We may also look at the matter in another way, suggested by our Holy Father Pope Pius X. in his encyclical of February 2, 1904 : *Ad diem illum*. Our Lord came into the world to found the Church, His mystical body. We may say, then, that the Church was conceived with Him in the womb of Mary. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the Mother of that Church and of all its members.

Moreover, whence does the Church take its birth ? It comes forth from the wounded side of our Saviour, under the symbols of blood and water. It comes forth by virtue of that sacrifice in which Mary takes part. It comes forth, the work of Mary also, to be first established in one heart, the heart of Mary. Once more, inasmuch as we belong to the Church, we have our life from her.

3. *Fitness.*—Considerations of fitness and harmony strengthen our reasoning.

(1) God has been pleased in the plan of our regeneration to follow the plan of our first creation. Does not this design place a new Eve beside the new Adam ? Does it not require the aid of both sexes in the work of our redemption as in that of creation ? (2) Is not the spiritual maternity one of those glories which enhance the Divine maternity of Mary, and which God, so to speak, could not refuse to His Mother ? (3) Christ represents all regenerated mankind. He wishes that men should take Him for their model, that each should be another Christ ; and are we not so more completely in having Mary for our Mother ? (4) Is not this honour of being spiritually the Mother of us all a just reward due to Mary for her merits, and for the sufferings she endured for our sakes ? In the

spiritual, as in the natural life, God gives us a loving Mother with a devoted father ; while we have these we can never feel that we are orphans.

II. 1. We must acquire a clear and precise view of the meaning of this spiritual maternity. As men take pride in their earthly parents, so let us be proud of the tie which binds us so closely to Mary.

2. Let this consideration increase our gratitude to God and to Mary. What a blessing for us in our spiritual progress to be able to count on the sympathy of a Mother's heart !

III. Our Duty as Children of Mary.

I. If Mary is the Mother of us all, if she voluntarily assumes all the duties of maternity, we ought in return to wish to be her children in reality, and conduct ourselves like loving children. Maternity establishes between mother and son a special and peculiar affection. The son speaks to his mother as he would not speak to any other person, even to his most intimate friend ; he asks a favour of her as he would not ask it of any other benefactress, however kind. Between the son and his mother there is a special language of affection, a special manner of making known his desires.

Our relations with Mary should show the love we bear her, and the confidence we repose in her. This was the feeling of the Saints, who were most devout to Mary ; this explains the fervent, almost passionate, language of their devotion ; this is what has been so long lacking in our own prayers.

II. Let us make up for lost time. As we realize

more fully the maternity of Mary, we shall better understand our duty towards her. Then, if we really desire it, we shall have grace to act as true children of Mary. That will be for us the beginning of a new life, a transformation of our relations with the Mother of God.

COLLOQUY.

As we understand better the full meaning of the words of St. Stanislaus Kostka, let us repeat with him his ejaculation of happiness and hope: *Mater Dei et mater mea*—Mother of God and my Mother! We shall pray better, and shall feel the consolation of prayer as we understand better how true it is that a child of Mary can never perish.

Ave Maris Stella!
Hail, Star of the Sea!

"*Jesu, tuam qui finiens*
Matrem dedisti servulis,
Precante Matre filiis
Largire cœli gaudia."

"Jesu, who in Thine agony
Thy Mother for our own hast given,
Oh, hear her when she prays that we
May share with her the bliss of Heaven."

FORTY-SEVENTH SATURDAY: THE GLORY OF MARY'S SUPPLIANT OMNIPOTENCE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—To the spiritual maternity of Mary is attached a special power of intercession, which is beautifully described as her

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

suppliant omnipotence. We shall consider — (1) this *singular power* of Mary's prayer ; (2) its *universality ;* (3) its *necessity.*

MEDITATION.

" Quid vis, Esther regina ? Quæ est petitio tua ? Etiamsi dimidiam partem regni petieris, dabitur tibi "—What wilt thou, Queen Esther ? What is thy request ? If thou shouldst even ask one half of the kingdom, it shall be given to thee (Esth. v. 3).

First Prelude.—Let us contemplate Mary in the splendour of Heaven making intercession for us, and if our imagination is stimulated by memories of the past, let us picture ourselves as praying to her in some sanctuary where everything reminds us of her goodness.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray God, who has always been so generous with His gifts, to grant us a better appreciation of them, that we may make better use of them, to His greater glory, and the honour of her who is at the same time His Mother and our own.

I. The Special Power of Mary's Prayers.

1. Mary possesses sanctifying grace and glory in a supereminent degree. If you infer from this that her intercession is more powerful than that of all other Saints, you are right ; but this is only the least of the reasons for the power of the Mother of God.

2. If you speak of a mother's right to command her son, you only express metaphorically the power

of Mary's prayers, without fully explaining the secret of it. For even in the human family, the son is emancipated from control as he grows from youth to manhood, and the dignity of the Word Incarnate is incompatible with any obedience which is not entirely voluntary.

3. Let us seek in Jesus Christ, and in His sovereign intercession, the explanation of His Mother's power; indeed, is not Mary the most perfect copy of her Divine Son? With the work of our redemption by Christ is connected His mediation. The one pays the ransom, the other applies it to us that we may profit by it. From the union of the Divine and human natures in Jesus Christ results a *theandric* action, such an action as can only belong to one who is both God and man. This action includes prayer, which, like everything else in Christ, is infinite in value, and consequently infinitely worthy of being heard. As the Redeemer of men, Jesus, by His prayer of mediation, brings down upon men, His children, the stream of graces which have their source in Him. And as He has purchased this redemption by His sufferings and painful death, He desires that the sufferer's prayer shall bring to us the effects of His mediation. St. Paul transports us to the Garden of Gethsemani, and shows us Jesus, "with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death" (Heb. v. 7)—prayers and supplications which make Him our glorious Leader and our Eternal High Priest.

Now let us apply this, point by point, to Mary, having regard always to the immense distance

which separates the creature Mary, the Mother of God, from that God who became man for us ; our true Father, the chief of the redeemed human race, from her whom He associated with Himself to make her our Mother ; the great sacrificing High Priest, possessing in Himself the principle of His power, from her whom, by His own grace and merits, He allows to co-operate in a secondary manner in the sacrifice of redemption. Mary has a special power of intercession by virtue of her position as co-redemptress of mankind. As Mother of God, spouse of the Word, elevated by Him to ineffable relations with all three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, Mary belongs to a higher world, and therein is possessed of a power whose dignity surpasses all other created power. That power may be exercised under the form of prayer and supplication. As spiritual Mother of men, it is her mission to cause those graces, in the production of which God has invited her to share, to be poured down upon men. And where will she exercise her ministry ? On Calvary, at the foot of the Cross ; that is her Gethsemani. It is there that she offers her Son, that she brings forth men ; and it is there that in her agony she offers up her prayers and supplications, the result of which is to bring down upon men the graces of the Redeemer.

Thus, the supplication of the Mother of men is immeasurably superior to all other intercession of the Saints. They pray only as friends and servants of God ; she prays as enjoying a community of spiritual blessings with the Word, her Spouse. And while we can only ask the Saints to pray for

us, we recognize in Mary a certain right to dispose of graces, as we address her in the words of the *Alma Redemptoris : Peccatorum miserere*—Have pity on us sinners !

II. 1. We can make a twofold application of the lessons of this meditation. This special dignity with which the actions and prayers of the Mother of God are invested leads us to reflect also on the special value attached to our own actions after sanctifying grace has raised us to the dignity of adopted children of God. This new nature has a special and superior power of intercession. What a difference there is between the prayers we offer to God as His children, and those we should have offered as simple servants ! Is not God, our Father, represented by that Father in the Gospel who says to the son who has always been faithful to him, " Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine " (St. Luke xv. 31) ? What confidence this feeling of adoption should produce in us !

2. Jesus and Mary bring down graces upon us by a prayer offered in an agony of tears and suffering. This showed the Saints that, to make their prayers for men effectual, the expression of their desires must be accompanied by voluntary expiation. O holy mission of Christian sorrow, blessed by Christ, and giving us the power to share with Him the honour of doing good and saving souls ! Have we the courage to recognize and practise it ? Do we realize that there can be no fruit in an apostolate without sacrifice ?

II. The Universality of the Intercession of Mary, Mediatress of Grace.

I. 1. We might first see how wide is the domain of Mary's intercessory power. (1) In time, her influence was exercised before she was born, for God foresaw the mediatress of grace who was to be associated with the Mediator of justice, and all men since the Fall of Adam have profited by the prayers of this great benefactress. (2) In its duration, the protection of Mary begins with the birth of every man, follows him to the end of his earthly life, and does not desert him even in purgatory. Not only can she, like other Saints, solicit the help of the living for the souls of the dead, but her intercession is directly efficacious for their consolation and deliverance. Is not that the belief of all Christian people, encouraged by the practice of the Church? (3) In its power, the influence of Mary is not exhausted by the number or the greatness of the needs she is called upon to help. The longer we continue this examination, the more glorious will Mary appear in the many ways she has of helping us.

2. But more than a general power of intervening in favour of men, Mary possesses a privilege of universal intercession. It is not only a suppliant omnipotence, to which nothing is refused; but God, in His desire to exalt His Mother to the highest possible honour, has decreed that all grace shall pass through her maternal hands, that every blessing of the present order shall be granted in view of the merits of Jesus Christ and of the intercession of Mary which is joined to those merits,

and derives all its powers from them. As the Word took our nature upon Him through Mary, so also she is the channel through which pass all the graces which descend from Jesus Christ upon mankind. Such was the opinion formulated in the fourth century by St. Ephrem, the great light of the Syrian Church, whose language has been adopted in the Oriental liturgies; it has echoed through the Church from the time of St. Bernard to that of St. Alphonsus Liguori, and we find the same clearly expressed in encyclical letters of the last three Popes. Is it not a natural consequence of the prerogatives and mission of Mary, a conclusion that is naturally drawn from all that the Church and tradition have told us of this incomparable Mother? (1) Mary has brought us forth spiritually to grace; it follows that she will continue to feed us, that in the distribution of graces she will have the same part that Providence assigned to her in their production. (2) On Calvary she suffered for all, she prayed for all, and thereby merited to exercise her benign influence over all. As she took her part in the sacrifice of the Cross, so she is united to Christ in order to make continual intercession for us. (3) Mary is the figure of the Church. Now, no man can receive grace without belonging to the Church—at least, in desire; all grace is contained in the deposit confided to this spouse of Jesus Christ, and she solicits for all who are her children, and all who may become her children, the application of the merits of Jesus Christ. Mary is, no less than the Church, united to her Divine Spouse. Did she not at the foot of the Cross receive into her heart

the Church and all the deposit of the graces of the Church? Does not her prayer equal, or even surpass, the prayer of the whole Church? (4) In short, the work of Mary in the dispensation of graces is the crown of all her work in the economy of Redemption. To deny that is to separate in Heaven that Mother and that Son whom we see so closely associated on earth in all the events by which our redemption was accomplished; to admit it is to preserve for Mary the place which she occupied in the Cenacle in the assembly of the Apostles and the first Christians, in which her prayer contributed to bring down upon the Church the Holy Spirit, who is the personification of all grace.

II. 1. Let us take delight in considering the honour resulting to Mary from this universal intercession. We see that in the Church, and, indeed, in the whole world, every great work approved by God and every pious action is thus a glory of Mary. She triumphs in the confessors, in the virgins, martyrs, apostles, and in all the Saints; in the generations which preceded her, and in those which come after her to the end of time. Let us rejoice for our dear Mother. The plenitude of her graces is a communicative plenitude: all men receive from her, as all receive from Jesus Christ.

2. Many men, indebted to Mary, are ignorant of their benefactress. We do know her. The duty of gratitude is as universal as the favour conferred; and the culpable or involuntary ingratitude of the majority should stimulate us to greater thankfulness.

III. The Necessity of Mary's Intercession.

I. This universal intervention of Mary has a certain character, which may be thus explained:

1. It is derived entirely from the providential dispensation of God and Jesus Christ, who desire that all grace shall be obtained with the help of prayer. It is not required by the justice of God, but it is an effect of His mercy towards Mary and ourselves. This prayer, indeed, covers our faults, supplies for our deficiencies, strengthens our energies, and is always in our favour.

2. It does not require us to implore the assistance of Mary every time we pray to God, but it makes us at least tacitly ask her to support our humble requests; and we could not wilfully and consciously dispense with this help without depriving our prayer of much of its efficacy.

3. It constitutes Mary the mediatress of grace and intercession.

II. 1. Before all, we have to thank God for His goodness in giving us a mediatress of grace in addition to the Mediator of justice, thus increasing our claim to be heard, making our prayers more powerful through our greater confidence.

2. This mediation, which makes the help of Mary indispensable, explains the strong expressions which the Church adopts from the writings of the Saints. By this mediation, Mary, after Jesus Christ and with Him, is truly our life, our sweetness, and our hope; and when the great doctors of past ages declared that in Mary was their only hope, their only refuge, their only defence, it was not a mere pious exaggeration, but an expression

of the truth, that without Mary no grace would reach them.

3. As before the coming of Christ, so now, even in the regions in which Mary is not known, the Mother of God is a great benefactress. But what a privilege it is for us to know her, and to be able explicitly to ask for her aid! Our constant appeals will never weary her, for to invoke her is to call upon her to accomplish her mission, and show herself our Mother; nay, more, while they dispose us to receive her gifts, they enable Mary to multiply her favours. Though the power of her intercession is unlimited, she would not resist the Divine ordinance, which gives graces to those who pray.

COLLOQUY.

If we have made this meditation with attention, we cannot fail to be convinced, like the great servants of Mary, of this great truth: Mary is our Mother, and we have everything to hope for from her. It only remains for us to imitate them in their language of reverent affection and confident prayer. Let us tell Mary all our wants, and end by reciting the *Salve Regina*, with special emphasis on the words, *Our life, our sweetness, and our hope!*

FORTY-EIGHTH SATURDAY: THE MOTHER OF GOD A FIGURE OF THE CHURCH.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The Blessed Virgin is said to be a figure of the Church, because she unites all the beauty and glory of the Church in her own person: the idea of comparing the Church

with Mary as its ideal type originates with the inspired writer, St. John. When he wished, in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, to describe the beauty and the sublime mission of the Church, no image seemed so fitting as that of the Mother of God. We shall consider in this meditation—(1) *the present beauty of the Church;* (2) *its mission on earth;* (3) *its spiritual fecundity.*

MEDITATION.

"Signum magnum apparuit in cœlo"—A great sign appeared in Heaven (Apoc. xii. 1).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the Blessed Virgin as a Queen radiant with the dazzling brightness of the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly ask for grace to grow in love for Mary and the Church.

I. The Present Beauty of the Church.

I. 1. The Church is revealed to St. John glorious with the sun with which she is clothed, the twelve bright stars in her diadem, and the moon under her feet. The Sun is Jesus Christ—the true Sun of justice, prefigured under this symbol in the Psalms: "He hath set his tabernacle in the Sun" (Ps. xviii. 6). The Apostles compose the rich crown of twelve stars, and the moon represents the inconstancy, the fickleness, the mutability of the world, dominated by the unchanging eternal Church.

Jesus Christ is her all, her warmth, her light: she is, as it were, absorbed in the splendour of the God-Man, her founder. The Apostles, like stars

around the Sun, constitute the glory of the Church, unchanging, indefectible, immortal.

2. This thought should increase our reverent love for Mary, morally identified as she is with the Divine Word, participating in all the graces, all the mission, all the glory of Jesus Christ. We see her in the Cenacle, surrounded by the Apostles, who, in proclaiming Christ, proclaim also the glory of His Mother. And her glory will never cease to grow greater.

II. When we have sufficiently contemplated this twofold image, it is good for us to look upon the Church as identified with Jesus Christ. How delicious are her warmth and light ! We lose sight of the weaknesses of her ministers and her disciples in the brightness of the Sun which gives her light and life. Our love knows no bounds, our admiration calls forth songs of praise. If we are tempted to look down at the poor things of earth, a ray of light invites us to raise our eyes to Heaven. And we are not deceived by what we see there ; the Church is Jesus Christ, and nothing unworthy of Christ can remain in the Church. The purest gold, the most brilliant gems, lose nothing of their value by reason of the dross by which they are surrounded, and which must be cleared away, as everything impure must be removed from the Church.

II. The Earthly Destiny of the Church.

I. The destiny of the Church is summed up in two similitudes by St. John. In pain she brings forth a man-child, whom she has to protect against

the hatred and cunning of the great dragon; and then she appears as a great sign in Heaven. She suffers persecution, and she is covered with glory.

1. *Persecution.*—The infernal dragon wars against the Church, and attempts to take Jesus Christ away from her, and so far succeeds that the Church is forced to hide herself and her child in the wilderness.

Does not this symbolic description remind us of the Blessed Virgin, who was compelled to retire into Egypt in order to escape from the emissaries of Herod? Of old it was said to the Serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." Mary is this woman; her seed is Jesus Christ and His spiritual children, the faithful. The dragon is angry at being conquered by Christ, the son of woman, and goes "to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Apoc. xii. 17).

2. *Glory.*—But at the same time the Church is a great sign set in Heaven, which all men recognize who are capable of high thoughts. It is a signal to rally, around which all those group themselves who truly hunger and thirst after justice and truth. "The Church," says the Council of the Vatican, "is as a sign raised above the nations; she attracts those who do not yet believe, and confirms the faith of her children."

II. 1. The persecutions to which the Church is exposed, and the humiliation that she suffers, ought not to discourage or surprise us. Instead

of diminishing our love for her, they call on us for an increase of devotion. The second battle shall have the same result as the first, described in the Apocalypse : the devil shall be overcome, and shall be cast for ever into the lake of fire.

2. Let us endeavour, by our enlightened faith, by our blameless conversation, and, above all, by our charity, to make the Church glorious in the eyes of those who, though not yet Catholics, have still the Christian Spirit within them.

III. The Virginal Fecundity of the Church.

I. The comparison between Mary and the Church suggests here very sublime considerations.

1. Full of purity and holy love, the Church comes forth from the side of Adam—the new Adam sleeping on the Cross. She comes forth to give Him children in those whom she will baptize and nourish with the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Spirit blesses her fruitfulness. But in consecrating the Eucharistic bread, the Church produces Christ Himself. Thus she is twice a Mother—Mother of the real Christ hidden under the sacramental species, and Mother of the members of His mystical body ; Mother of a Son who sanctifies others, and Mother of other sons, who, alas ! too often neglect the means of sanctification. But the stains of these children cannot tarnish the beauty of the Church. They may commit sins, or wholly abandon the truth ; but the Church remains virgin and spotless, pure in her faith, unchangeable in her supernatural code of morality.

2. Have we not already admired the marvellous

operation of the Holy Spirit, who crowns the virginal purity of Mary with her wonderful maternity? Mary first brings forth Jesus Christ, that afterwards, as the second Eve, she may be born again of Him, and may surround Him with innumerable children of whom she is the Mother.

II. We all are children of the Church, and at the same time children of Mary. Let us thank God for this great privilege, but let us take care that our lives may be worthy of the two pure and glorious mothers whom He has given us.

COLLOQUY.

Let us assure Mary of our love, and ask her to keep us faithful to the Church for her sake: if we are alarmed by the course of events, or discouraged by the misdeeds of professing Catholics, let us lift our eyes to Mary, and we shall see more and more clearly the perfections of the Church. Mary, dear Mother in Heaven, help us and guide us.

FORTY-NINTH SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS PLACE OF THE MOTHER OF GOD IN HOLY SCRIPTURE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—Controversy is outside the scope of this work, the object of which is to state what is the accepted teaching of the Church, in order to suggest practical reflections and rules of conduct, without any attempt at demonstrating the truth of the doctrine. In approaching the great subject of the place occupied by Mary in Holy Scripture, we shall content ourselves with this remark: that by one of those

changes familiar to the human mind commentators have passed from extreme boldness to exaggerated caution in dealing with the sacred text. Formerly every passage was made capable of a mystic and hidden meaning ; now too narrow limits are assigned to the language of inspiration. It would be a great mistake to limit the meanings of Holy Scripture to such as the least credulous could not help discovering. To understand any book thoroughly, we need to know fully its meaning and its plan. The incredulous look upon Holy Scripture as a purely human work ; it is clear, therefore, that all their deductions must be vitiated by this fundamental error. From the remains we find of fossil animals, we can reconstruct them entirely with more or less precision ; but our knowledge will never be that of a contemporary who has seen them living and moving. We may say of those who are strangers to the faith, *Oculos habent et non videbunt*—They have eyes and see not (Ps. cxiii. 5). Holy Scripture presents itself to us as living, both in the God of eternal truth who inspired it, and in the tangible tradition of the Church. And this is the rule by which we must study it. We shall consider in the present meditation—(1) *what an honour it is to be mentioned in Holy Scripture ;* (2) *Mary's place in the Old Testament ;* (3) *her place in the New.*

MEDITATION.

" De me . . . ille (Moyses) scripsit "—Moses wrote of me (St. John v. 46).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the Blessed Virgin as a woman clothed in dazzling light,

wearing a diadem on her brow, and trampling underfoot all that is perishable and unsubstantial.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask that we may grow in love and reverence for the holy Mother of God.

I. The Honour of being mentioned in Holy Scripture.

I. 1. If it is reputed an honour to receive the commendation of some writer of renown, if conquerors and distinguished men have longed for the praise of poets and historians, it is a far higher honour to be mentioned with approval by a pen which is guided by the Holy Ghost. This glory has various degrees according to the events recorded, and the place in their recital; to have a share in sacred history is a much higher thing than to be concerned in human events. Nothing is so honourable as to be the subject of prophecy, for then God seems to intervene twice to cause us to be spoken of.

2. No one possesses this honour to such a degree as Jesus Christ. He is the centre towards which all things in the sacred books converge. Of the Scriptures He said Himself: "The same are they that give testimony of Me" (St. John v. 39).

The law prepares His people, the prophets predict His kingdom, the Evangelists describe Him in the accomplishment of His mission, the Apostles inculcate His Spirit in the Church. Of all the sacred writers, of every page they wrote, Jesus can say: "They spoke of Me." Our Lord also dominates all the ages; before Him came a

long procession of holy men to herald His coming, after Him comes another to sing His praise.

3. After Jesus, Mary holds the place of honour in the Sacred Scriptures ; she is there in the literal sense, and under the veil of figures. History and prophecy alike are concerned with her : she is in Genesis, which takes us back to the cradle of the human race, and in the Apocalypse, which reveals what will take place at the end of the world. In a certain sense, is she not everywhere ? By analogy, indeed, we can apply to Mary all that is said of Christ, because of the intimate union which binds her to her celestial spouse ; all that is said of the Church, for Mary is the type of the Church ; all that is said of the Christian soul, for Mary is its most perfect ideal. We see in all this the special honour that God bestows on Mary, and the special interest that we have in common with the whole human race in remembering our dear Mother.

II. 1. We all share to some extent this great glory of Mary. The Epistles speak of us as Christians ; under this name we are predicted, and in us all figures are realized. In us is accomplished spiritually all that took place visibly in the history of the people of God, for St. Paul says, " Now these things were done in a figure of us "; and again, " All these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the world are come " (1 Cor. x. 6, 11). And to Timothy he explains the purpose of all Holy Scripture : " All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be

perfect, furnished to every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). Let us thank God for the honour He has done us; let us bless Him for having left us this monument of His wisdom and His goodness, in which we learn to know Him as He is.

2. Do we treat the Holy Scriptures with proper respect? Do we read them diligently, and with faith, and confidence, and humility? Is the New Testament especially familiar to us? Let us often ask God that we may have a true understanding of the meaning of Holy Scripture. In our day especially, in the midst of so many controversies, it is our bounden duty to pray for light and help, that we may work for the glory of God and the good of the Church without any thought of our own personal honour and advancement.

II. Mary's Glorious Place in the Old Testament.

I. 1. In certain passages Mary alone occupies the thoughts of the inspired writer. In the opinion of most illustrious theologians and commentators Mary is the woman who is spoken of in the proto-evangel, as she is also the virgin of whom Isaias prophesies that "she shall conceive and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is. vii. 14). What a majestic figure she is already! Genesis shows us Mary without sin, victorious over Satan; the prophet sets forth her virginity, her maternity, her intimate union with the Son of God.

2. Many passages of Holy Scripture, though not directly referring to Mary, nevertheless give us occasion to praise her virtues and her dignity.

(1) The Psalmist sings of the glory of God's dwelling-places, and all that is contained in the Psalms on this subject applies in the fullest sense to Mary, the chosen tabernacle of the Most High. They are built upon the high mountains, they are of surpassing magnificence ; God covers them with the shadow of His protection ; He loves to hear prayers and supplications offered within them. The Most High fixes His habitation in the sun, the figure of the Heavens ; on earth He chooses Jerusalem, Mount Sion, and the temple. All these are types of our Blessed Mother, representations of the spiritual dwelling which God was to choose for Himself in His Church, and, above all, in Mary.

(2) The Canticle of Canticles is an epithalamium of the mystical marriage which Jesus Christ contracts with the Church and with the Christian soul. Who is the Spouse in the Canticle ? Mary in a special sense ; she is the dove, the beloved, preferred before all, the object of Our Lord's special affection.

(3) Other passages which refer in the first place to the Son of God may be applied to Mary by communication. The Church herself attributes to Mary all that is written of Eternal Wisdom. Let us not forget that it is far more glorious to be the image of the Infinite than the model of a creature.

(4) The historical personages of the Old Testament often remind us of Mary, either in themselves or in some of their actions ; and the same may be said of certain inanimate objects. Let us think of Eve and Paradise, Esther and Judith, the ark of Noë, the dove and the olive-branch, the burning bush, and the fleece of Gedeon ; and, bearing in

mind what St. Paul tells us of the figurative character of the Old Testament, we may consider all these as types chosen by the Holy Ghost to represent the glories of Mary.

II. 1. What a magnificent picture of Mary we could paint by the aid of Holy Scripture !

2. If we appeal to the practice and tradition of the Church, how many arguments we find in the sacred writings to confirm the prerogatives and perfections of the Mother of God !

3. Certain passages may be applied to ourselves as well as to Mary. Let this association encourage and console us. We also are the temples of the Most High ; the burning words of the Canticle are addressed to our souls also. How this fact should remind us of the holiness we must strive to attain, and the love which God bears us !

III. Mary's Glorious Place in the New Testament.

I. 1. The Gospels, especially that of St. Luke, repeatedly set forth the supreme glory of Mary, for she is spoken of no less than eight times as the *Mother of Jesus*. They testify in the mystery of the Annunciation, as the Book of the Acts of the Apostles does in that of Pentecost, to the abundance of graces and privileges with which she was adorned.

2. In our meditations on the public life of Jesus, we have seen that, for reasons which have been fully explained, Mary kept herself in the background ; but even this self-effacement is all to her honour : it makes her virtue more conspicuous,

it exalts her son as the Son of God, and draws our attention to what is the crown of her maternity, her intimate spiritual union with the Divine Word.

3. Mary reappears beneath the Cross, and again in the Cenacle ; in the Apocalypse she is the glorious figure of the Church, and thus the last of our sacred books combines with the Gospel narrative to show us in Mary the Mother of God and the Mother of men.

II. Comparing our position with that of the Jews under the Old Law, St. Paul reminds us of the privilege we enjoy of contemplating Christ in Himself, and no longer in imperfect types and figures ; and he concludes, " But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord " (2 Cor. iii. 18). May we not say the same of our knowledge of Mary ? We live in an age when her privileges have been revealed to us in the clearest light by the authority of the Church. As true children of Mary, should we not advance day by day in knowledge of our dear Mother and in likeness to her ?

COLLOQUY.

Let us express to Mary the reverence and devotion which these considerations excite in us, and let us meditate on the numerous types of Mary in the Old Testament, given in the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception, and then let us ask the great Mother of God to be to us truly a Mother of mercy and goodness, such as St. John has shown her in his Revelation.

FIFTIETH SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS PLACE OF MARY IN HISTORY.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall endeavour to get a clear idea of the glory of Mary in history by considering the place assigned her—(1) by *tradition;* (2) by *controversy;* (3) by the *belief of the Christian world.*

MEDITATION.

"Mulier timens Dominum ipsa laudabitur; . . . laudent eam in portis opera ejus"—The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised; . . . let her works praise her in the gates (Prov. xxxi. 30, 31).

First Prelude.—Let us once more contemplate the vision of the woman clothed with the sun, as described by St. John.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may grow in reverence and love for the Mother of God.

I. THE GLORY OF MARY IN TRADITION.

I. 1. A period of preparation seems to have been necessary to put clearly into relief the Divine Person of Jesus Christ in His unity of nature with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Ever since that time, however, Mary is shown to us as the antithesis of Eve and the model of all Christian Virgins. She is thus represented on the wall of the catacomb of St. Priscilla, which is believed to be coeval with the first origin of Christian art, or but little removed from it.

2. The proclamation of the Divine maternity at the Council of Ephesus marks the beginning of her glory in history, as that maternity itself is the

principal of all her perfections. And since that time we cannot better describe the honour paid to Mary than by saying that among the Fathers and doctors and Saints of the Church, and among ecclesiastical writers, there is not one who is not enthusiastic in her praise. They go so far as to say that no honour is too great for Mary except that which belongs to God alone, that no praise of Angel or men is too great for her merits. From that time she is truly clothed with the light of her Son, and glorified with Him.

3. What was the source of all these honours and praises? Apparently they may be attributed to a threefold sentiment which was deeply rooted in the hearts of these great representatives of the Church. (1) Their incomparable devotion to the God-Man excited in them an intense reverence for her who was privileged to become the Spouse of the Word, the Mother of His humanity. The more they loved Christ, the more they praised His Mother. (2) Mary, the Queen of men, the glory of the human race, inspired them with that noble pride which all loyal subjects feel in their Sovereign. All nations in the world are gratified by the honour paid to their own ruler, and thus the Saints and doctors of the Church have rejoiced in the homage which the Angels offer to Mary. (3) The choice of Mary as Mother of God, her consent to this maternity, as also to the Sacrifice of the Cross, her sublime mission to men, excited their filial love and confidence. They reverenced Mary, they were proud of her, they loved her.

II. An earnest study of Mary's perfections should produce in us similar fruits of devotion.

II. Mary in Controversy.

I. 1. At the time of the Council of Ephesus one word served as the rallying-cry of Catholics—the Greek word *Theotokos*, Mother of God: it symbolized the victory of the truth, and from that time the saying became current, which was generally received in the seventh century, "Mary triumphs over all heresies." It is as strongly asserted now as then: the Church repeats in her honour the praise bestowed on Judith, "By thee the Lord hath brought our enemies to nought," and in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin she invokes her with the words, "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; thou alone hast destroyed all heresies." We have in a former meditation contemplated Mary as victorious over heresy; these congratulations of the Church show us again the victory of Mary over error.

2. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a sign of orthodoxy. We cannot abandon Jesus Christ without insulting His mother, nor can we profess for her all the reverence that is due to her unless we profess in full the whole faith of Jesus Christ so intimately are their destinies united, so nearly do the same dogmas concern Jesus and Mary. How closely is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception connected with that of Papal Infallibility! The Pope, who without any Council, proclaimed the former, seemed already to assert the latter dogma, which was to be defined a few years later by the Council of the Vatican. It may be said that Mary, exalted by Jesus Christ and His Church, watches with grateful care over the purity of the faith in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Most heretics give up devotion to Mary. Jansenism joins hands with Protestantism in abandoning the Blessed Virgin, and even in the Catholic Church a coolness in devotion to Mary is generally the first sign of religious indifference.

II. Since these things are so, let us place the purity of our faith under the protection of our blessed Mother; in these troublous times let us ask her to obtain for us a truly Catholic spirit.

III. Mary and the Christian People.

I. 1. God protects the faith of His people, and preserves His Church from all possibility of error. It is for the good of the *Ecclesia discens*, the body of the faithful who are taught the faith, that Our Lord has guaranteed the infallibility of the *Ecclesia docens*, the body of pastors who teach it.

2. How eloquent and touching is the spectacle of the homage which the faithful pay to Mary! Without waiting for laboured demonstration, they admit all the titles of honour that we have claimed for the Mother of God, and their unanimous acceptance is the most powerful of arguments. And in how many ways they work to do honour to the Blessed Virgin, their Mother! All the arts are called into requisition: architecture erects cathedrals in honour of Mary; painting and sculpture fix her image in our minds and our hearts under various forms; literature sings of her joys, her sorrows, and her glories; theology formulates the teaching of the Church concerning Mary, and answers the objections made against the faith; asceticism stimulates us to love and honour her.

And who can number the devotions practised in her honour, in public and in private? Mary has received the consecration of little children and of mighty kingdoms. Devotion to Mary among Catholic people is a legacy from the past, which each generation will hand on to the next, until the end of the world.

II. Our life is short, and will soon pass away. Shall we have offered Mary all the tribute of love and honour which our position or circumstances invite us or authorize us to pay her? Let us ask ourselves the question, and, according to the answer, perfect or correct our practice.

COLLOQUY.

Let us rejoice with Mary in her glory, and ask her to let us help to make her more honoured and loved.

Ave Maria.

FIFTY-FIRST SATURDAY: THE EXALTATION OF MARY ABOVE THE ANGELS AND SAINTS.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We all have some idea of Mary's glory in being raised to a higher place than all other creatures in the kingdom of Heaven; let us endeavour in this meditation to acquire a clearer perception of that glory, so as to gather spiritual fruit for ourselves. We shall consider—(1) *the glory of her exaltation;* (2) *the joy it causes to the angels and saints;* (3) *the effect of this joy.*

MEDITATION.

"Vidi . . . quasi solem et lunam et stellas undecim adorare me"—I saw . . . as it were, the sun and the moon and eleven stars worshipping me (Gen. xxxvii. 9).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Mary in the splendour of Heaven, near the glorious throne of her Son, on the right of His Father.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may realize more fully the happiness of this exaltation of Mary, in order that we may have an increased reverence for our dear Mother, and may make more strenuous efforts to attain perfection.

I. The Glory of Mary's Exaltation.

I. 1. Mary surpasses in glory and happiness not only all the Saints, but all the Angels also. What an honour this certain truth confers on Mary!

(1) Shall we compare Heaven to a dwelling, a palace? Yes; indeed, it is the most magnificent of dwellings, adorned by the presence of the most noble inhabitants. Mary is mistress in this dwelling, Queen in this palace.

(2) Shall we compare this company of Saints and Angels to a people? Yes, a people unnumbered, a chosen people, such as no monarch could ever dream of seeing under his rule. Mary is their Sovereign.

(3) Or do we prefer to look upon this great multitude—drawn up in such perfect order, and so brave in its appearance—as an army? It is indeed a triumphant army, of which every soldier

has won the most glorious of victories. Mary is at the head of the army, bearing in her hand the conqueror's palm.

2. What glory! But even this is not all. What prince, what emperor, what victorious general, ever lived who united in his own person all the nobility, the merit, the valour of all his subjects or soldiers? Mary has all the glory and virtue possessed by all the legions of celestial spirits and the elect. In her are conspicuous even those special gifts which, bestowed upon Apostles and doctors for the accomplishment of their mission, have been given to her for the inward adornment of her soul.

II. 1. Oh, what a glorious Queen of Paradise is she, in whom we recognize the Mother, who lived such a life of humble obscurity on earth! Let us offer her the homage that is due to such a queen.

2. Now let us learn a lesson for ourselves. (1) Let us aspire to win by our fervour, and our fidelity to grace, a high place in Heaven, whether our position in this world be exalted or lowly. That is the noblest aim we can set before us. (2) Let us remember that all this glory is merely accidental. Mary might be deprived of it all, and yet be perfectly happy. We, too, must find our essential happiness in God, in God alone.

II. The Joy caused to the Angels and Saints.

I. 1. Mary is not alone in her joy. The Angels and the Saints rejoice with her, for there is no jealousy in Heaven.

Whence comes this joy of the *Angels?* How can they take delight in seeing above them a creature who is by nature inferior to them? (1) They love God, and in the order of created beings the glory of Mary is the most beautiful manifestation of the Divine goodness. (2) A perfect charity makes the happiness of each one to be shared by all. (3) The happiness they enjoy is not diminished because of the more abundant share bestowed on Mary. Could this part have been theirs, even if it had not been conferred on Mary? (4) Theirs is an absolute happiness which is valued for itself, and is not like earthly satisfactions, which are relative, and prized only for the advantage they give us over our neighbours.

2. We are all called to this infinite happiness. Let us, then, understand how mean is that spirit of envy which makes us care less for doing well in the sight of God than gaining some superiority over others. What do we see only too often? One person leads an ordinary life without any ambition for higher things; another soul, favoured by God, shows a higher degree of virtue; the first is full of envy and jealousy! What miserable vanity! What narrowness of mind! This is not striving after true happiness, but only after one's own temporary exaltation; and in giving way to such mean thoughts, we lessen our own merits in the sight of God. Let us get rid of such feelings, which show themselves by making us severe in our judgments, and grudging in our praise of others. Let us strive rather to attain true holiness.

II. 1. Why this joy of the *Saints?* They have

two special motives for rejoicing: (1) Mary is their great benefactress—their glory and happiness are the effect of her prayers. (2) Mary is the honour of her people. Through Jesus and Mary human nature gains the two highest places in heaven. *Tu gloria Jerusalem!*—Thou art the glory of Jerusalem!

2. Mary is a living proof to us that, though inferior to the Angels by nature, we can surpass them in grace. What a sublime object is offered for our efforts!

Have not we to acknowledge the special influence that Mary has exerted on our conversion, our vocation, our sanctification? Let us rejoice with our Mother, and at the same time try to raise ourselves to the level of the sanctity of the Angels.

III. The Effect of the Joy of the Angels and Saints.

I. The joy which the Angels and Saints feel in the happiness of Mary is an accidental increase of their own happiness. It permits the Angels to taste the joy of seeing the places left vacant by the revolt of Lucifer filled through the merits of Christ and the prayers of His Mother; sympathy makes them share the joy of Jesus and Mary, and establishes in Heaven a delicious harmony, of which all taste the ineffable sweetness.

II. Even on earth the absence of jealousy and rivalry means harmony and concord; and so united, men enjoy a sort of community of blessings which makes each one a sharer in the advantages of all.

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask Mary to obtain for us an increase of charity and zeal, that our hearts may be wide open to all those sentiments which are pleasing to our dear Mother, and closed to everything that would make us unworthy of her.

Ave Maria.

FIFTY-SECOND SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS RELATIONS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD WITH THEHOLY TRINITY.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—All beauty, all greatness, disappears before that which man possesses in God. We have therefore reserved for the conclusion of our meditations our consideration of the supreme glory which the Mother of God derives from her relations with the Most Holy Trinity. The subject is important enough for three meditations, but for want of space the three have been compressed into one, but so arranged that the relations of the Mother of God with each person of the Blessed Trinity may furnish matter for a separate exercise. The three great divisions of the meditation are: (1) *Mary and God the Father;* (2) *Mary and God the Son;* (3) *Mary and God the Holy Ghost.*

MEDITATION.

"Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Omnipotens" — Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty (Apoc. iv. 8).

First Prelude.—Let us try to imagine the splendour of Heaven; the sublimity of the throne on which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost receive the reverent homage of the whole Court of Heaven. Angels and Saints sing an Eternal Hosanna to their God, and gaze with rapture on Mary in her place of honour as Mother of Jesus Christ.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to know and love our Mother better, that she may lead us to a more perfect devotion to God, thrice-holy, the beginning and end of all things.

I. Mary and God the Father.

However great may be the dignity of Mary, and however close her resemblance to her Son, who is also the Son of God the Father, Mary can only be the daughter of God the Father. He is the Source and Principle of all things, and Mary has received from Him all she possesses. We shall see how truly she is the daughter of God the Father by her holiness, her resemblance to the only Son of God, and her resemblance to God the Father Himself.

I. 1. By a special grace of God we all share with Mary the privilege of being His children, as St. John says: "*Quotquot autem receperunt eum, dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri, his qui credunt in nomine ejus*"—But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name (St. John i. 12). But Mary more than any other pure creature enjoys the benefit of this adoption, by her eminent

holiness, and the perfection with which she has responded to the advances of God.

2. May the words of St. John excite our warmest gratitude! Let us endeavour to respond fully to the graces of God, for we may be sure that we shall find our greatest happiness in being what God would have us be.

II. 1. Mary brought near to the God-Man by the closest relationship, connected with the person of the Divine Word, is the most perfect likeness of the only Son of God. By her close union with this Son, she shares even His filiation under a new title, which raises her to the highest glory, and adorns her with honours unspeakable.

2. Our sanctification consists in imitating Jesus Christ, in reproducing Him in ourselves. If we make this the sole object of our lives, we are sure to bring down upon ourselves abundant blessings.

III. 1. After the humanity of the Word, Mary is the most excellent work of God. Therefore she makes us know God better; she is better able to show Him forth than the whole world, than all created worlds together. Does she not even imitate the Father in His ineffable paternity? Is she not associated in this paternity, since (to use the words of the Bull *Ineffabilitis*) "one and the same only Son belongs naturally to God the Father and to the Blessed Virgin"?

2. In the same degree in which we perfect ourselves we resemble God, and by the very fact we become a more perfect outward manifestation of Him. Can we imagine any greater honour?

II. Mary and the Divine Word.

The maternity of Mary was like that of other women. We can therefore understand the bond of union created by it between herself and Jesus Christ, and we can also have an idea of the human nature, in all respects like our own, which the Word united to His own person. But this hypostatic union, the infinite dignity which results from it, all the nobility and holiness for which this human nature is indebted to the Word, constitute a mystery, unfathomable by our understanding. Similarly, the maternity of which we have knowledge brings Mary into relations with the person of the Word which we cannot realize, but which, like all glimpses of the infinite, will bring help and comfort to the soul which meditates upon them. We shall let our minds dwell on the *union between Mary and the Word*, the *spiritual enrichment* of Mary which resulted from it, and, lastly, the inspired *Epithalamium* written in its honour.

I. *Mary, united to the Word.*—(1) The union by which the human nature is joined to the Word is intimate and indissoluble. It is a complete and reciprocal communication, such that the two natures constitute but one person. It is eminently a spiritual marriage.

But this human nature is formed in the chaste womb of Mary. All it possesses, all the matter it contains, was part of the substance of Mary before it became the substance of Jesus. This is the closest of all relationships, that which unites the child to His Mother. How could it do other than create

that other relationship, the close alliance between Mary and the Divine essence of her Son? This is not all. Children do not choose their own parents. But here the Word from all eternity chose her in whom and through whom He would take a human body. What an honour for her on whom His choice fell! And what a wondrous union with her, worthy to be called by the name which denotes the union between bridegroom and bride!

(2) The God-Man belongs also to the human family. It is our nature that He has taken; the blood that flows in His veins is our blood. We also, therefore, have a relationship with Jesus Christ as man; we also have an alliance with the Divine Word, which the Angels do not enjoy. Man, recognize thy dignity!

II. 1. *Mary, enriched by the Word.*—What other bridegroom could ever be more generous? What other could lavish more precious jewels on this bride than Jesus did on Mary? By this alliance—(1) He gives *Himself*, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, and forming with the Father the one principle from which the Holy Ghost proceeds. The Father of the Word becomes the Father of Mary; the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Mary; and thus, by her union with the Word, Mary acquires ineffable relations with all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. She is, as we have seen, the privileged daughter of the Father, and, as we shall see in the third point, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

(2) Then He bestows His *gifts*—the gifts of the Word—that is to say, His grace, His wisdom, His holiness.

Mary thus finds in the Word all her greatness. How great must have been her gratitude!

2. Everything comes to us also through Our Lord. Do we feel sufficiently our duty of gratitude and love to our supreme benefactor?

III. 1. *The Epithalamium.*—This only was wanting to complete the glory of Mary, that it should be sung by God Himself. And so it is. The Canticle of Canticles, that Divine hymn which celebrates the union of Christ with His Church, celebrates also the union of the Word with her who is the perfect figure and representative of that Church. The Word is there represented as enraptured by the beauty with which He Himself has adorned His bride, and she is drawn to Him, to seek Him, to please Him, to repose in Him. All the expressions in which the inspired writer sets forth the praises of his bride, His love for her, and her love for Him, are applicable to the Blessed Virgin; she can say with more truth than St. Paul, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

2. If we have at hand the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, we can find many extracts from the Canticle of Canticles. The force and tenderness of these expressions should raise our thoughts to Heaven, for the same expressions apply to every faithful soul. The Gospels, too, and the Epistles speak to us in the most touching words of the love which Our Blessed Lord bears us, the espousals of the pure soul and her God.

3. Does not this love of God, of which, thanks to the Word, we are the objects, enable us better

to understand the duty we owe Him, giving ourselves wholly to Him, and living for Him alone?

III. Mary and the Holy Ghost.

We shall see that Mary is at the same time the *spouse*, the *temple*, and the *figure* of the Holy Ghost.

I. 1. *Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Ghost.*— The existence of the Holy Ghost is the necessary consequence of the ineffable love which God bears to Himself. He represents, therefore, the love which God manifests outside Himself; and all the alliances to which creatures are invited by that love are considered as His work. In Mary there appears a double alliance with God.

(1) The alliance by sanctifying grace, virtues, and gifts possessed in the most eminent degree of which a creature is capable.

(2) The alliance by maternity. The Divine love, which is the principle of the Incarnation of the Word, belongs by appropriation to the Holy Ghost. But in this mysterious production of Christ's human nature everything makes us forget matter and the senses, everything therein is holy, and the power of the Most High which overshadowed Mary is the Spirit of God. In the first chapter of Genesis we read that the Spirit of God moved over the waters, and they were filled with fish; the Spirit of God made the birds to fly through the air, and filled the earth with life and animation. The Spirit of God breathed the soul into the first man. And who should clothe Mary

with her Divine maternity, and work this miracle that the Virgin of virgins should bring forth a Son? The Holy Ghost. Oh love of God, principle of life and salvation!

2. The alliance by grace is common to Mary and to ourselves. What an honour to us! The thought of it should fill us with lofty sentiments, and make us lead lives worthy of our high vocation! "The charity of Christ presses us" (2 Cor. v. 14). We are called upon to live in close union with God.

II. 1. *Mary is the Temple of the Holy Ghost.*—Grace, virtues, supernatural gifts, are the sign of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the souls, and even in the bodies, of the just. "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19). The excellence of graces in Mary made her already a privileged temple of the Holy Ghost. But if the Holy Ghost dwells where the gifts of Christ are found, how much more will He dwell where He finds Christ Himself! A temple more sanctified by His presence will she be who is the Mother of Him in whom "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporally" (Col. ii. 9).

2. Let us admire Mary as a temple a thousand times more beautiful than the temple of Solomon; let us approach her with something of that reverential awe which we feel in presence of things specially marked with the seal of holiness, or even more than that, for no other holy thing, no other temple, is so worthy of God.

3. And while we feel our unworthiness of such a privilege, let us show our gratitude by living not

after the flesh, but after the spirit—that is, by regulating our conduct not according to the lower or simply natural desires of the body, but according to faith and the inspirations from on high.

III. 1. *Mary is the Figure of the Holy Ghost.*—The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Word by an ineffable communication which the Word makes to Him by love ; He represents the life and the sweetness of God ; He is symbolized by the dove.

So Mary, the beloved of the Word, sees the Word come to her, give Himself to her. She who of her own life has given life to a God is the best representative of the Divine life upon earth. We call her "our Sweetness," and she represents the bride in the Canticle of Canticles, who bears also the name of the dove.

2. All these attributes of Mary have their counterpart in us. The Word communicates His wisdom to us. He calls us to listen to Him and learn of Him (St. Matt. xi. 29), to be simple as doves (*ibid.*, x. 16) ; and He tells us that the peace-makers shall be called the children of God (*ibid.*, v. 9).

COLLOQUY.

Through Mary let us go to Jesus, and through Jesus let us offer our homage to the Most Holy Trinity ; then let us thank God for the intimate communion to which a pure creature, Mary, our Mother, was admitted. Lastly, let us reflect that God would have us raised to close union with Him. This will remind us of our duty of faithfulness and

devotion, and will lead us to ask God to bless our good resolutions.

Ave Maria. Gloria Patri.

FIFTY-THIRD SATURDAY: THE GLORIOUS ETERNITY OF THE TRIUMPH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—Nothing is more sad or humiliating to man than to pass away, and to be in his work and himself conquered by time. To endure and to triumph over time is his greatest glory. Let us recognize this supreme honour in Mary. We have seen her victorious in every way, surrounded by glory of every kind. Let us now admire the eternity of her triumphs. We shall consider — (1) *the eternity of her work;* (2) *the eternity of her essential happiness;* (3) *the eternity of her accidental honour.*

MEDITATION.

"Conscidisti saccum meum, et circumdedisti me lætitia; ut cantet tibi gloria mea; et non compungar: Domine Deus meus, in æternum confitebor tibi"— *Thou hast cut my sackcloth, and hast compassed me with gladness: to the end that my glory may sing to Thee, and I may not regret: O Lord, my God, I will give praise to Thee for ever* (Ps. xxix. 12, 13).

First Prelude.—Let us endeavour to imagine the splendid throne occupied by the Queen of Angels and Saints.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray God that the thought of the eternal triumph of the Mother of

Christ may turn us from all perishable things to fix our thoughts on Jesus and Mary, that our hearts may be where Jesus reigns and Mary shares His glory.

I. The Eternity of the Work of Mary.

I. Mary, like all other mortals, saw the days and years roll by: her actions succeeded one another, and to all appearance passed into oblivion like the actions of the rest of mankind. But in reality all her actions remained, as the seed survives in the fruit. For the present and visible world they passed; they remained for the world to come. And when the glorious moment of her assumption arrived, she found in eternal happiness all she had done on earth. She found her Son, of whom it had been written, "They shall perish, but Thou shalt continue: and they shall all grow old as a garment. And as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail" (Heb. i. 11, 12). And there she found her thoughts, her actions, her sorrows, her joys, all changed into eternal rewards. She had done all her acts with greater care and deliberation than any other, and those deliberate acts were all full of merit.

II. While all other aspirations, and conceptions, and actions are lost in oblivion, those which tend towards God remain. God marks with the seal of His eternity whatever is done for Him.

Let us learn, like Mary, to free ourselves from the bondage of temporal things; let us not yield

to the influence of the earthly atmosphere that surrounds us, nor of men who live absorbed by the desires and cares of the present. If we live for eternity, we shall make ourselves and all we do eternal. Let us have a right intention, let our actions be done with reflection, and all for Heaven; then we shall never regret the passing hours, and shall never be disappointed.

II. The Eternity of the Essential Happiness of Mary.

I. 1. Eternal happiness is a blessing which does not change, and the possession of which is secured against all possibility of loss. Not every blessing is capable of being possessed eternally. In order that it may be so, it must never produce satiety. Infinite happiness is the only boon that never surfeits; therefore it alone can be possessed for ever; it even requires that its possession shall be unending. How could we enjoy infinite happiness for a few years only? The certainty of having to lose it would at once plunge us into inconsolable despair.

2. Mary possesses infinite happiness for ever; she possesses it in the highest degree possible for a pure creature. Let us imagine the peaceful security of her possession. It is like a great lake, whose tranquil waters are unruffled by any stormy wind. The Son sits for ever at the right hand of His Father, and Mary at the right hand of her Son. Nothing can disturb or lessen her happiness, or stale its freshness ever so little. Mary is so assured of infinite happiness for ever, and of

enjoying it more fully than all the other elect, that no one would dream of troubling it.

II. The good things of this life are not only transient in their nature, but incapable of being possessed eternally. Their possession, if continued, would produce satiety, and this would be followed by disgust. Let us, then, never be so foolish as to set our affections on those things which cannot endure for ever.

III. The Eternity of the Accidental Honours of Mary.

I. 1. Mary is essentially happy in God, and accidentally in her innumerable prerogatives of soul and body; in the homage that is offered to her, in her children, who owe their happiness to her intercession. She can contemplate all her privileges with perfect security, for none can ever be taken away from her; the future will only bring her an increase of glory.

2. Let us contrast with the good works and the happiness of Mary the evil deeds and the miserable fate of her enemies. She numbers amongst them those who have used against her the weapons of insult and calumny, anger, and ridicule, open force and secret treachery. And what have they succeeded in raising against her? All their works are less than so many towers of Babel; overthrown and levelled with the ground, they can only be compared to the castles which children build on the seashore. The tide rises, and passes over them, and no trace of them remains in the level sand.

This destruction of the schemes of her enemies, this downfall of adversaries who are compelled to acknowledge their defeat, will be the greatest of all Mary's victories.

II. 1. Mankind is divided into two great classes: the one honours Mary, gives her at least the implicit homage contained in every sincere prayer that ascends to Heaven and every good act effected by the help of some grace obtained by her intercession. And these honours remain transformed and perfected in Heaven. The other class rebel and declare war against Mary; but these insults and attacks disappear into oblivion, and their authors confess their guilt in repentance or despair.

Let us rejoice with Mary; let us be of those who see in their devotion to her an infallible pledge of eternal happiness.

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask Mary that we may be of the number of those who, like her, see earth and the things of earth pass away, but do not pass away themselves, because they are the children of eternity. Let us thank God for the glory with which Mary is crowned, as we thank Him for the grace which she received in the first moment of her existence. "I am Alpha and Omega," He says; "the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb"—that Lamb whom Mary bore for us.

Te Deum. Magnificat. Ave Maria.

SUPPLEMENTARY PART

MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY GHOST MOVEABLE FEASTS, ETC.

FIRST SECTION

MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY GHOST

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

In the twentieth year of his reign, Pope Leo XIII., seeing the end of his life approaching, felt impelled to recommend the work of his apostolate to that Divine Spirit whom Our Lord sent to His Church to complete His work of redemption. The Holy Father thus raised a doctrinal monument to the glory of the Holy Ghost.

The Encyclical, *Divinum illud*, published on May 9, 1897, exhorts the faithful to renew the fervour of their devotion to the Holy Trinity, and especially to the Third Person, God the Holy Ghost; it deplores the complete or partial ignorance which forms such an obstacle to the piety of many Christians, and reminds the priests of the duty incumbent upon them to employ their zeal in impressing upon their congregations clear ideas on the subject of the Holy Ghost, and in making known the innumerable blessings He has conferred upon them.

In conformity with the desire of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the following series of meditations has been written, treating of the Holy Ghost and His office in the economy of our salvation and sanctification. They begin with a novena in preparation for the Feast of Pentecost, consisting of meditations on devotion to the Holy Ghost, and the mission of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. This is followed by an exercise for the feast itself, and a series of meditations on the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

May the grace of the Holy Ghost fill our hearts,

and may the miracles of His power renew the face of the earth in these days when trouble and persecution threaten the Church of God !

ARTICLE I. NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR PENTECOST.

FIRST DAY: THE OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF DEVOTION TO THE HOLY GHOST.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—If we love God, or if we desire to love Him, let us seek to have a better knowledge of the Holy Ghost, and a better understanding of the devotion to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. We shall consider—(i.) the *sublime object of this devotion ;* (ii.) the *purpose of the devotion ;* (iii.) the *motives for it* which are suggested by the foregoing considerations.

MEDITATION.

" Emittes spiritum tuum et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terræ "—Thou shalt send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth (Ps. ciii. 30).

First Prelude.—Let us try to imagine the vision which unfolded itself before the eyes of St. John when he saw the four-and-twenty ancients falling down in adoration before Him that sat upon the throne, while the hymn of the heavenly hosts re-echoed through Paradise, " Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come."

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may have grace to understand all the excellence of the devotion to the Holy Ghost, in order that we may pass our lives in holy fervour.

I. THE SUBLIME OBJECT OF THIS DEVOTION.

I. Devotion to the Holy Ghost is directed, as the name implies, to the Third Person of the Most Holy

Trinity. Angels in Heaven and men on earth were created to know and contemplate the Three Persons in one Divine essence or nature. But while I wait for the light of Heaven to disperse the mists of my feeble understanding, what an unfathomable mystery envelops Thee, O God, whom I praise and adore! Creating and sanctifying Spirit, who will explain to me Thy origin? Even if I have to confess that I cannot comprehend Thee, yet will I never cease to love Thee, and therefore I desire to recall all that Thou hast condescended to reveal of Thyself, and to offer Thee the homage of a sincere and fervent act of faith.

Faith teaches me that *Thou art God*, that *Thou proceedest from the Father and the Son*, and that *Thou* art called *the Holy Ghost*.

1. *Thou art God.*—As the Third Person of the one and indivisible Trinity, Thou art consubstantial with the Father and the Son, possessing to the fullest extent the same nature which is common to Them, the same power, the same wisdom; in all things equal to the Father and the Son, differing from Them only in Thy origin.

2. *Thou proceedest from the Father and the Son.*—As Jesus Christ, the Divine Word, is the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, so we believe that from all eternity Thou proceedest from the Father and the Son, as from one principle. For a reason which passes our understanding, Infinite Wisdom, which is common to all Three Persons, requires by its very perfection that there shall be in God a Second Person, the Divine Word; and Infinite Love, common to all three Persons, demands for an equally mysterious reason a Third Person, proceeding as Love. The Divine nature is communicated to the Son by a wholly spiritual generation; we can neither define nor imagine the mysterious manner in which the Divine nature is communicated to the Holy Ghost. It is not generation, but the whole world of creation gives us no image by which we can form an idea what it is.

3. *Thou art called the Holy Ghost.*—God is a spirit;

but when we give Thee this name as distinctive of Thyself, we do not mean merely to designate the substantially spiritual and holy nature which is communicated to Thee by the Father and the Son; we intend to express, as far as the imperfection of our understanding and our language permits us, the ineffable manner in which, by reason of the love with which God loves Himself, Thou proceedest from the Father and the Son as from one principle. That manner of procession we call *spiration*. In a Divine manner, which passes our understanding, Thou proceedest from the Divine essence common to the Father and the Son, as the breath of man comes out of his mouth. Thou art the breath of that love which God bears to Himself; the mysterious outpouring of that love within Himself, the inward expression, the life of infinite love, emanating from the Father and the Son, without passing out of the depths of the Divine Being; the supreme completion of the Holy Trinity.

Spirit of God.—Thou art to our eyes the breath which inspires all energy, all life of creatures, from the humble vital force which makes the plant grow and flourish to that higher life to which God invites us, and whose acts are all begun and continued by Thy special aid.

Holy Ghost.—I read this name in Holy Scripture, I find it on the lips of the Church. How well this name becomes Thee! The same love of God for Himself which is the ineffable reason of Thy being makes us see more clearly also the holiness of God. It shows that God, who is the Creator of all things, finds in Himself His end and His happiness; that everything else is holy only inasmuch as it bears some likeness to the holiness of God. We call Thee holy because, being first and supreme love, Thou leadest the souls of men to holiness, which consists essentially in the love of God.

Spirit of God, proceeding by love, Thou bearest also the name of love, as the Son, proceeding by wisdom, is called the Word. And as the visible works of God, inasmuch as they are the fruit of

wisdom, constitute a sort of visible word representing the Eternal Word, so the visible outpourings of Divine love in all things are attributed to Thee, as Thou art the love of the Father and the Son.

II. 1. These teachings of the Faith show us clearly that the honour to be rendered to the Holy Ghost is the supreme honour of *latria*, which can only be given to God Himself.

2. The sublimity of this teaching ought not to discourage us ; on the contrary, it should fill us with holy hope. I, who now realize but vaguely the imperfect notions which are within the reach of human intelligence, shall one day understand the mysterious reality. Now I know in part, but then I shall see face to face, and shall know even as I am known.

3. While awaiting that happy day, let us prostrate ourselves before that infinite Majesty which prepares it for us ; let us adore the loving-kindness of God, as we bow before Him in silent recollection, or sing again and again the hymn which echoes unceasingly in heaven : "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is, and who is to come."

II. The Sublime Purpose of Devotion to the Holy Ghost.

I. 1. If we are asked why we worship the Holy Ghost, the question is easily answered : Because all the gifts of Divine love are attributed to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, who is Himself the first and greatest gift of God.

If we could gaze upon the adorable Trinity, we should see the unity of the perfections common to all Three Persons, and the manifestation of the Divine attributes would give us cause to glorify the entire Trinity. But in the present imperfect state of our knowledge, the relations of origin which distinguish the Three Persons lead us to attribute to each of them distinct corresponding perfections, and the works in which those perfections are made manifest. All are necessarily common to the Holy Trinity, but

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

all do not equally represent the Three Persons that are in God. Because the Person of the Father is the principle of the other two Persons, we attribute specially to Him power, and the works in which that power is manifested ; wisdom and the wonderful works of wisdom remind us of God the Son, whose special characteristic is the perfection of Divine intelligence. The Holy Ghost proceeds by way of love. He is the Love of the Father and the Son, as the Son is the Word of the Father. Therefore all the works which show forth the love of God, all the benefits of that love, bring to our minds the Holy Ghost. He is the first and supreme gift of God, because the first gift of love is love itself, and God cannot give us a more excellent blessing than His love.

2. We can now state precisely what is the worship of the Holy Ghost.

This worship has for its *material* object the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, and for its *formal* object the love which God bears to us, manifested in all the works of His love. This love, while common to all Three Divine Persons, belongs to the Holy Ghost by *appropriation*.

The worship of the Holy Ghost honours the Divine Person whom the gifts of Divine Love bring before our eyes ; it is the worship of the eternal love of God, in the Person whose origin is in that love.

3. The more numerous the gifts of Divine love which we receive, the greater is the homage due to the Holy Ghost. " Who can deny," says St. Basil, " that all the gifts which God, in His goodness, confers upon man, whether by Himself or through Jesus Christ, come to us as a grace of the Holy Ghost ?"

But who shall calculate the effects of that goodness ?

(1) Are not all the works of God *gifts of His love ?* Let us take the Creation ; let us seek the reason of the existence of all that is outside God. What necessity, what advantage, what hope of enjoyment, could influence the creative Will of God ? We can

find none. Let us think of all the possible reasons, and we shall find the explanation of the creation of the world only in the gratuitous goodness and love of God. The Holy Spirit is Creator ; it is not without reason that the hymn to the Holy Ghost begins with these words : *Veni Creator Spiritus !*—Come, O Creator Spirit blest !

(2) There are certain works which bear witness with special eloquence to the love of God towards men. Where is the love of God more magnificently shown than in the most wonderful work of all, the mystery of the Incarnation ? And this manifestation of God's love to men is expressly attributed to the Holy Ghost. The Gospel tells us, " Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost " (St. Matt. i. 18).

Moreover, the Church and all her privileges, all the prerogatives conferred upon her for the exercise of her ministry of salvation, the infallibility of her *magisterium*, the perpetuity of her priesthood, the power of forgiving sins—all belong to this invisible mission of the Holy Ghost, which was revealed in its glory on the Day of Pentecost.

To this mission must be added another—namely, the internal mission of the Holy Ghost to the souls of men. How shall we describe its manifold effects ? How many gifts it recalls to us ! Sanctifying grace and the spirit of adoption, infused virtues, supernatural dispositions which bear the special name of gifts of the Holy Ghost, extraordinary graces gratuitously given—all those never-ending impulses by which He directs us to our supernatural destiny.

And this sanctifying action is crowned by His continual Presence.

II. 1. Let us recall to mind the magnificent catalogue of the gifts of Divine love, in order to excite our gratitude and multiply our acts of thanksgiving.

2. Let us endeavour to realize that the homage we offer to the Holy Ghost is given in reality to the Holy Trinity, because the love which evokes it is common to the Three Divine Persons. And let us not look upon growth in the knowledge of God as

mere useless speculation ; an exact and, so far as may be, distinct view of things is of inestimable value in the spiritual life. Can solid devotion possibly be founded on error ?

III. Reasons for Fervour in Devotion to the Holy Ghost.

I. These three principal considerations are sufficient to furnish us with strong motives for cultivating devotion to the Holy Ghost : the *excellence of the devotion*, the *good pleasure of God*, and *our own spiritual profit*.

1. *The Excellence of the Devotion.*—By our homage to the Holy Ghost we honour, in the Divine Person who represents Him, a love uncreated, eternal, identified with God Himself—a love which, after having created us, sanctifies us, and enables us to attain our supernatural happiness. This homage is directly addressed to God, and the reasons which dictate it are the greatest of His works. Can we imagine any more excellent devotion ?

2. *The Good Pleasure of God.*—(1) Devotion to the Holy Ghost makes us affirm and proclaim that the works of God manifest not only His wisdom and power, but also His goodness and love ; that power creates them, wisdom orders and arranges them, but that love is their principle and their crown. What kind of devotion can please God better than that which causes Him to be blessed in all things, and puts into our mouths the inspired words, " God is charity " ? (1 St. John iv. 8).

(2) Moreover, we may judge by contrast. Our Lord, in the most solemn words, condemns the sin against the Holy Ghost, declaring that it shall not be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come (St. Matt. xii. 32). May we not, therefore, conclude that, while insults offered to the Holy Ghost are a grievous offence against God, the honour paid to the Holy Ghost is eminently pleasing to Him ?

3. *Our Own Spiritual Profit.*—Devotion to the Holy Ghost raises us at once above the earth, above

the mire of sin. In reminding us that infinite love is our beginning and our end, it inspires us with the most sublime sentiments. The more conscious we are of the Divine friendship, the more jealous we are to preserve it; and the duties which bring us nearer to God—filial submission, gratitude, charity—appear to us in a clear light which does not permit us to ignore or neglect them.

II. Let us realize the value of these motives, in order that they may exercise their salutary influence over us. Nothing makes such a strong impression on a man as the love that is shown him; and shall we leave the love of God without any return? Is there any more imperative duty than to love the love of God? May we endeavour to manifest our devotion to the Holy Ghost by living a life wherein every thought and every deed is directed by love, since we owe all to the love of God.

COLLOQUY.

1. Let us first call to mind all we owe to God's threefold love. Above everything, we have the beginning and end of all good, the eternal love of God, attributed by appropriation to the Holy Ghost. But this love, which is infinite in its nature, surpasses all understanding, all imagination; therefore, God helps my weakness, and gives me a God Incarnate, who has feelings such as I can understand, such as I feel myself. And the feeling of this God-Man for me is love, so great as to lead him to give Himself for me on the Cross and in the Holy Eucharist. This second love, though human in form, is nevertheless that of God; its value is infinite. Then, again, in order to come nearer to us, the Word Incarnate prepares for me a Mother's heart, that of His own Mother, the Mother of God, but also the Mother of men. Mary loves me—she prays for me; God loves me—He accepts the mediation of Christ, He hears the prayers of Mary, and gives me every grace.

2. After these considerations, let us first thank the Blessed Virgin with all our hearts for her love of us.

Then, begging for her intercession with her Son, let us thank the Heart of Jesus for the love by which It is consumed for us, and for that with which It inspires His Mother towards us. Lastly, through Jesus and Mary, let us address the Holy Trinity, and bless God for that eternal charity by which the world has been created and most wonderfully restored, to which we owe the mission of the Holy Ghost, the Heart of Jesus, and the heart of Mary.

It is too much, O my God! How can I any longer refuse to devote my life to love of Thee? With the most profound reverence I offer Thee my heart, and protest that I give it to Thee, and Thee alone. It is too poor to suffice for the duty of loving Thee as Thy gifts deserve; at least let Thy grace, O God of goodness, draw it wholly to Thee.

My God, because Thou art so good, I love Thee with all my heart, and for Thy sake I love my neighbour as myself.

SECOND DAY: THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD BY THE HOLY GHOST.

Plan of the Meditation.— In the encyclical letter *Divinum illud*, the argument of which we shall follow in this meditation, Pope Leo XIII. shows how the power of the Holy Ghost is manifested by the great mystery of the Incarnation. Indeed, although the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity alone was incarnate, although the Word alone took our human nature, yet the *Active Union* (as theologians term it) —that is, the mysterious operation which joined our human nature to a Divine Person—is, like all the works of God, common to all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and is especially attributed to the Holy Ghost. No other work more perfectly exhibits the love of God towards us. "*Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret*"—God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son (St. John iii. 16). This meditation will be consecrated to that greatest of all gifts bestowed on mankind, and we shall consider—(i.) *the Divine love which is manifested*

therein ; (ii.) *the necessity of the Incarnation ;* (iii.) *the sublimity of the gift ;* (iv.) *the solemn lessons it teaches us.*

MEDITATION.

" Nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus iis, qui diligunt illum "—Neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him (1 Cor. ii. 9).

These words, the meaning of which is sometimes limited to the happiness of Heaven, may be understood of the Incarnation, and the whole economy of salvation, which is derived from it.

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves at Nazareth at the moment when that great mystery of love was accomplished.

Second Prelude.—Let us implore Our Lord to give us grace to understand the immense debt we owe to the charity of God, so that the love of God may become the chief desire of our souls.

I. The Love manifested in the Incarnation.

I. The Incarnation reveals also an infinite Omnipotence and infinite wisdom. But when we consider it in connection with the Holy Ghost, we forget all the rest, in order to see in it a gift of Divine love infinitely generous and infinitely merciful.

1. *Infinitely Generous.*—God finds means to give us Himself, and thus to touch the limits of a power which seemed illimitable. There are three great prodigies of infinite power which can never be surpassed—the Humanity of Christ, the Divine Maternity of Mary, and the Beatific Vision—and we are contemplating the first and greatest of these. The creature cannot better express the intensity of his love than by saying, " My love has done all it could." We can easily understand this expression on the lips of a human being, but it would seem utterly impossible in the mouth of God. There is no gift so great that we cannot imagine some greater—none, except God Himself. And, behold ! in the Incarnation He gives us Himself.

2. *Infinitely Merciful.*—(1) What is the occasion for the bestowal of this great gift? Is it offered as the prize of some glorious victory, the reward of heroic sacrifice, of tried and faithful service? No; God has given this wonderful gift to sinful man, deservedly driven out of Paradise. The God of all goodness banishes man from a garden of earthly delights in order to lead him by a more glorious way to the joys of Heaven. He makes the earth more sad and barren in order to make heaven more beautiful; He bows our heads towards the ungrateful soil in order to turn the drops of sweat which fall from our brows into precious jewels. For a time He makes us subject to the body, the senses, external circumstances; but as brethren of Jesus Christ we are promised a liberty, the glory of which shall be greater than the humiliation of our present bondage.

(2) God gives Himself by the Incarnation. But this is not all: He gives Himself for the second time, and in a manner more glorious than the first. He gave Himself once, when he called mankind to share His happiness; this gift was contained in the grace received by our first parents, but by their sin we lost the benefit of this grace. Then God condescends to renew the same magnificent offers; but in doing this He clothes Himself with our nature, and holds out His gifts in hands pierced for us upon the Cross, in order to compel us, so to speak, to take advantage of this opportunity of infinite happiness. The Incarnation is God's return for the sin of man—a marvellous return, which draws from the Church, in the Office of Holy Saturday, the words in which she seems to congratulate herself on the sin of Adam: *O felix culpa quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!*—O happy fault, which merited such and so great a Redeemer!

II. Let us endeavour to realize the depths of the loving generosity and mercy shown in the Incarnation, and also the imperative duty which lies upon us to show a *generous* love to God in return—a love which grudges no offering and no sacrifice, which does not count what it gives to God, who has given

so generously to us, and a *merciful* love. But how can we show mercy to God? By showing mercy to our neighbour, and freely pardoning all his offences, for God has told us that what we do to His brethren we do to Him.

A complete rule of life, new, perhaps, to us, is contained in these two precepts of generosity and mercy.

II. The Necessity of the Incarnation.

I. The necessity for the Incarnation is clear, for we should have been born to no purpose if we had not been redeemed. Deprived of eternal happiness, and the means of attaining it, we should have had nothing before us but an absolutely useless life. Joys, sorrows, good deeds, all would have been useless; our evil deeds would have been fatal. What would have been our lot if the Holy Ghost had not given us Jesus Christ? We understand the feeling of a man in imminent danger of death, as he grasps the hand stretched out to save him. Such should be our feeling of gratitude to Jesus Christ, Incarnate God. Let all our lives show forth this gratitude.

II. It would be a useless life, we have said, on which the Word of God did not shed the influence of His Incarnation, but we must understand also that all parts of our present life which we withdraw from that salutary influence are equally useless. Bad actions are fatal, for they lead us to perdition; but worthless also are the defective sides of all our actions, because they are not enriched by the merits of Jesus Christ.

Our loss is all the more deplorable because it is accompanied by labour and trouble. "We have wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways; but the way of the Lord we have not known" (Wisd. v. 7).

Let us grieve for the loss we have suffered by our own fault, but not permit our sorrow to degenerate into hopeless dejection, which is barren of results; let us rather make amends for our faults by diligence and fervour in the service of God.

III. The Inestimable Value of the Gift.

I. It rarely happens that the most necessary gift is at the same time the most excellent; ordinarily it is only a foundation on which everything else rests. Thus, the life of the body prepares and makes possible the exercise of our intelligence, and yet we do not think by means of our bodies. The benefit of the Incarnation extends from the foundation to the summit of our true and supernatural destiny; no gift is more indispensable, yet none is more sublime.

1. Take away the humanity of the Word, and Heaven is closed to us, grace is unattainable; give us this humanity, and it is an inexhaustible source of all grace. Our Lord tells us, " I am the way, and the truth, and the life " (St. John xiv. 6).

2. In the Incarnate Word human nature puts on an infinite dignity, which exalts it above the nature of the Angels; we have no longer any reason to envy the celestial spirits.

3. Thanks to the Incarnation, we can all be grafted into the Son of God, receive from Him the sap of life, make but one body with Him, become morally identified with Him.

4. The Incarnation stamps Divine grace twice with the seal of love—with the Divine love, which is the source of grace, and the theandric love, which has paid the price of it.

II. 1. Let us offer our fervent gratitude to God, who has given us such magnificent proofs of His love.

2. God gives us a great vocation; let us not neglect it, but endeavour to correspond with it to the best of our power, pressing near to Our Lord, in order to imitate Him, and unite all our actions with His; and thus, while we raise ourselves, we shall better glorify Our Divine Lord.

IV. The Great Lessons of the Incarnation.

I. The Incarnation, that great grace of the Holy Ghost, throws a clear light on all other graces, and inspires us with strong and holy ideas.

1. It increases the value we set upon a reconciliation purchased for us by the blood of our Redeemer.

2. It shows us clearly how earnestly God desires our salvation. Wounded by sin, I found it difficult to know and follow the path of duty. The invisible presence of the Word of God was no longer sufficient for me, and therefore, in pity for my weakness, He offered Himself to be my visible guide, full of goodness and mercy.

3. By a sensible presence which we can understand, by an outward resemblance which we can perceive by our senses, the Incarnation makes it easier for us to believe in the intimate presence of God within us, and the wonderful manner in which sanctifying grace makes us like to the infinite.

4. Since God condescended to come down to us, we cannot doubt that He will find means by which we may raise ourselves to Him. As St. Cyprian tells us: *Quod homo est esse Christus voluit, ut et homo possit esse quod Christus est*—Christ wished to become what man is, in order that man also might be able to become what Christ is.

II. 1. These considerations ought to fill us with confidence and a desire to rise to higher things.

2. Without making God more worthy of my love, the love which He shows me in His human nature gives me a new way to love Him, and imposes upon me a special obligation to render homage to His love. I am bound to love and adore Him in that nature which He took for my sake; and since, in humbling Himself to bring Himself nearer to me, He seems to forget my vileness, His condescension demands a particular care to pay Him honour and reverence in return.

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask the help of our dear Mother, in whom the Incarnation worked such glorious effects, and excite in ourselves lively sentiments of reverence and love. In that world which God has so magnificently created, and still more magnificently redeemed, let us read the manifestations of a love beyond compare.

Let us recognize our duty of glorifying the goodness of God, and make an offering of ourselves for the purpose of fulfilling this duty throughout our whole lives; and let us conclude our exercise with that beautiful prayer which the priest uses when he mixes the wine and water in the Mass: "O God, who in creating human nature didst wonderfully dignify it, and afterwards more wonderfully reform it, grant that we may be made partakers of His Divinity who vouchsafed to become partaker of our humanity, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Thy Son, who with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth God for ever and ever. Amen."

THIRD DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE WORD INCARNATE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The Word, who was incarnate by the operation of the Holy Ghost, teaches us Himself, by His doctrine and example, the devotion which we seek to know better and to practise better. His humanity is sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and He places it under the guidance of the Holy Ghost for all the acts of His public and private life. Again, a short time before dying for us He excites in His Apostles, by the touching language of His fatherly solicitude, a great desire for that Holy Spirit whom He is about to send them. The encyclical *Divinum illud* recalls this discourse, this sanctification, and this influence of the Holy Ghost on the humanity of the Word, and tells us that this influence, partly hidden and partly visible, represents the twofold mission of the Holy Ghost—the one visible in the Church, the other invisible in the hearts of the faithful. The Pope himself invites us to fix our thoughts on this most eloquent and persuasive teaching, which is contained in the life and discourses of the Word Incarnate. We shall therefore consider—(i.) *the humanity of the Word sanctified by the Holy Ghost;* (ii.) *the same humanity led by the Holy Ghost;* (iii.) *the promise of the Holy Ghost made by Jesus Christ.*

MEDITATION.

" Expedit vobis ut ego vadam ; si enim non abiero, Paraclitus non veniet ad vos : si autem abiero, mittam eum ad vos "—It is expedient to you that I go ; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you : but if I go, I will send him to you (St. John xvi. 7).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine that we are with the Apostles after the Last Supper, listening eagerly to the touching words which Our Lord addressed to His faithful friends at that most solemn hour of His life.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray earnestly for grace to put ourselves more completely under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, in order to make our lives more conformable to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. Christ sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

I. Let us endeavour to represent to ourselves, as clearly as we can, the holiness of the Incarnate Word ; not that substantial holiness which He is as the Word of God, equal in all things to the Father, but that holiness the ineffable charm of which adorns His human nature.

1. The power of God, by uniting a human nature to the Divine Person of the Word, invests that human nature with a holiness which is proper to the Word Incarnate, and which cannot be found in any created being. Without any operation whatever, but simply by its immediate presence, the Divinity anoints with its substantial holiness the human nature which exists in the Person of the Word ; entirely present, it communicates its entire holiness, a holiness which is infinite. By the operation of the Holy Ghost the Word is made flesh ; by the same operation He receives in His human nature the unction of the Divinity, and becomes the Christ, the anointed of the Lord. Thus Christ possesses an infinite holiness ; He is the Son of God by nature, and not by simple adoption.

2. The dignity with which this human nature is clothed excludes all possibility of sin, makes it the object of God's good pleasure, and demands, from the first instant and before all merit, the plenitude of supernatural graces; while at the same time it is a title to every excellence and every dignity. From the very moment of the Incarnation, all those supernatural gifts which constitute the created holiness conferred upon the just abound in the soul of Christ; nay, more, from that moment the soul of Christ enjoys to the fullest extent the beatific vision; and if He is not yet glorified in His body, if we do not yet see Him surrounded by the outward splendour of royalty—if, even, He desires to merit by His free acts the fullness of His glorification, nevertheless henceforward He is King, and worthy of all honours.

This sanctification by grace and supernatural gifts is the work of the Holy Ghost; besides the unction of the Word to whom it is united, the humanity of Christ receives also the unction of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in Him with all the fullness of His gifts. Let us think of all the prodigies of grace; all these are to be found in Christ in that abundance which God, in the counsels of His wisdom, has thought fit to realize outside of Himself; all are found in Christ, as in their inexhaustible source.

II. 1. Let us pause to contemplate the splendour of the graces of the Word Incarnate; let us repeat in honour of Christ the inspired words of praise: "God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Heb. i. 9); "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally" (Col. ii. 9). When we recite the Litany of the Sacred Heart, let us ponder the meaning of these beautiful invocations: "Heart of Jesus, hypostatically united to the Word of God . . . in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Divinity . . . in whom the Father is well pleased . . . whose fullness is poured out upon us all."

2. Let us next consider this fact: The kingdom of Christ includes the whole world, all persons, and all things; His dominion extends over all human and

angelic intelligences. The very devils acknowledge His empire, and tremble. But He wishes to be our Head by making us partakers of His graces and His life. To this end He merited for us that grace and that glory which He had not to merit for Himself, and all His desire is to unite us to that great and glorious body of which He is the Head. He invites us to an even closer intimacy than that which unites Him to the Angels, "for nowhere doth He take hold of the Angels, but of the seed of Abraham doth He take hold" (Heb. ii. 16). None but we can have a common nature with Him; in us alone a heart is found like to His own. We alone enjoy the Holy Eucharist; and although He reigns over the Angels as over the Saints, and sheds all His brightness upon them, yet, according to the most probable opinion of theologians, we alone owe to His merits the grace of adoption and the inheritance of glory.

Do not these reflections make us earnestly desire the unction of the Holy Ghost, which sanctifies and transforms the human nature of Christ? This is a privilege to which no nature without intelligence can aspire; a privilege from which the devils and the damned are excluded by their own fault, but which may be mine, merited for me by Jesus Christ—which, indeed, is mine, provided that I am in favour with God. And do not our relations with Jesus Christ make these gifts specially precious to us?

> "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
> And in our souls take up Thy rest;
> Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
> To fill the hearts which Thou hast made."

II. The Humanity of the Word under the Guidance of the Holy Ghost.

I. From the contemplation of the gifts and graces which habitually adorn the soul of our Saviour, let us turn our attention to His actions, His operations.

1. Let us admire first the perfect unity which reigns in all the acts of our dear Saviour. It includes three principles of action, three appetites:

as a man like to us, Our Lord both feels the emotions of the sensible appetite, and possesses the higher appetite which corresponds to our intelligence; as true God, He has one common will with the Father and the Holy Ghost. But a strict subordination establishes and maintains a complete harmony between these faculties, as between their acts. The spiritual will absolutely regulates all the sensible affections, and is in perfect submission to the good pleasure of God. So it is that all the acts of Our Lord, the least as well as the most important, are accomplished under the influence of the Holy Ghost; that they all have a Divine character, not only in the person who performs them, but also in the end to which they are directed, and in the motive by which they are determined.

2. From the first moment of His existence, the human nature of Our Lord was always guided by the Holy Spirit, but as He came out of the water after receiving baptism from St. John, the presence of the Holy Ghost was solemnly manifested. "Lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him" (St. Matt. iii. 16). These words of the Gospel express the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which He was filled. After His baptism, we are told, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert (St. Matt. iv. 1), and still later He Himself tells us that He casts out devils by the same Spirit (St. Luke xi. 20). What is the object of this manifestation and this testimony? With baptism Jesus begins His public life, and He desires to show to all the world that He teaches and works miracles in the Name of God, that He does everything in virtue of His Divine mission.

II. What a lesson is this for us!

1. This same Saviour, who takes our nature and models our souls supernaturally after His own, desires that our lives shall be regulated by His. By His example in His inner and private life He teaches us how to attain to perfection, and to practise devotion to the Holy Ghost in the most excellent manner. Let us follow Our Lord's teaching, and place our-

selves under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, by a habit of frequent recourse to Him, and by a firm resolution to obey His direction. We shall find in the lives of the Saints abundant examples for our imitation. If we are tempted to dissipation, let us refuse firmly and persistently, but at the same time gently, so as not to hurt the feelings of others, and thus lessen the influence we might otherwise exert for good. Let us pray constantly for light and help; let our intentions be pure, and little by little we shall attain to that profound recollection in which the soul, drawn nearer to God, will enjoy a perfect peace, and be impelled to acts of sublime virtue. We shall act under the eye of God and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

2. What lessons we should glean from that august mission which Our Lord undertook in such a solemn and public manner!

(1) Our Lord condemns in advance all false prophets, all pseudo-reformers, all those presumptuous persons who dogmatize without authority, and disturb the peace of the Church and the world.

(2) He warns of their imprudence all Catholics who presume to judge and criticize the acts of their pastors, and to preach reforms which they initiate themselves without any competence to do so.

(3) He inculcates in us a due respect for those whom the Holy Ghost has set over the Church of God. They also speak to us in virtue of that Divine mission transmitted by Christ to His Apostles. "As My Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (St. John xx. 21).

(4) He urges those who are entrusted with this apostolic work to entrust to the Holy Ghost the success of their labours.

III. The Promise of the Holy Ghost by Our Lord.

In order that we may derive more abundant profit from these Divine teachings, let us meditate on the *circumstances* of the promise, the *expressions* which accompanied it, and the *truth* they contain.

I. *The Circumstances.*—How precious and touching do these sublime lessons of Our Lord become when we consider the circumstances in which they were given! He gives them shortly before He dies for us, and ascends to Heaven; after His Last Supper, and at the repasts which He condescends to share with His friends even after His Resurrection (Acts i. 4); in two never-to-be-forgotten scenes of farewell, one which preceded His bitter Passion, the other which came between the triumph of His Resurrection and His glorious Ascension. Thus these lessons form part of the last outpourings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

II. *The Words Themselves.*—1. Our Lord promises a Paraclete, who shall abide with His disciples for ever; the Spirit of truth "whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him" (St. John xiv. 16, 17). He tells them that the Spirit will teach them all truth, and enable them to understand all that Jesus Himself had already taught them, and all that remains for Him to say (St. John xiv. 26 to xvi. 13); that the same Spirit will give testimony to the Son of Man, and convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment (St. John xv. 26 to xvi. 8). "It is expedient to you," Our Lord concludes, "that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (St. John xvi. 7).

So far we read in the Gospel of St. John. In the Gospel of St. Luke, and in the Acts of the Apostles, written by the same Evangelist, the promise is confirmed, but the Apostles receive in addition the express injunction to stay in the city till they shall be endued with power from on high (St. Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4).

2. These expressions show us most clearly that Our Lord, for most sublime reasons, did not wish to complete by Himself the mission His Father had entrusted to Him, but that He left to the Holy Spirit the task of crowning it, as an ever-present Comforter, as a Teacher who gives us wisdom to understand and strength to accomplish; and St. Paul

tells us that " the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings," because without Him " we know not what we should pray for as we ought " (Rom. viii. 26).

This language should increase our desire for the coming of the Holy Ghost, and it also suggests the following beautiful thoughts : (1) Our Lord shows us all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity working together, as it were, for our salvation : the Father, for it is He who sends the Son, and this Father also loves the faithful followers of Christ (St. John xvi. 27) ; the Son, for it is He who gives His life for us ; and the Holy Ghost, for He is sent by the Father and the Son to perfect the work of our salvation. Let us show forth our gratitude, and praise the goodness and the holiness of the Triune God. " O Most Holy Trinity !" St. Ignatius used to say in accents of the deepest devotion. (2) The external works of God appear to us in complete harmony with the ineffable operations which take place in the bosom of the Divinity. The same Divine Person who completes the Holy Trinity completes also in love the work of omnipotence, assisted by uncreated wisdom. (3) From His human nature Our Lord leads our thoughts to His Divine nature ; He extols that Divine love, of which, by loving us in His human nature, He desired to give us a full understanding.

III. *The Explanation.*—These words of Our Lord contain a twofold truth.

1. *The Holy Ghost crowns the work of Our Lord.* What does this mean ?

The mission undertaken by Jesus Christ is one of reparation and mediation. The Word is made flesh, in order to make satisfaction for our sins, to show us the way to Heaven, and to merit for us the supernatural life. Every gift of God comes to us through Jesus Christ ; He is for us the way, and the truth, and the life (St. John xiv. 6). But above the Mediator, the God made man, we see the God to whom He reconciles us ; and that reconciliation is completed in a kiss of peace : that kiss is the grace of the Holy

Spirit. One grace gave us the Mediator ; the effectual outpouring of graces crowns the mediation which has merited them for us ; and this outpouring, again, belongs to the mission of the Holy Ghost. Thus Christ teaches by word and example, but the Holy Ghost enables us to receive His teaching, and engraves His law in our hearts (St. John xiv. 26). Christ gives us the power to be made the sons of God (St. John i. 12), but the Holy Ghost comes into us with the grace of adoption (Rom. viii. 15). Christ founds the Church, and declares Himself its Head, but the Holy Ghost is the soul, which gives unerring truth and fruitfulness to the preaching of its pastors, efficacy to the Sacraments, and perpetuity to the priesthood.

2. *Our Lord must go away before the Holy Ghost can come.* What does this mean ?

It is true that the just men of the Old Testament lived a supernatural life, merited by Christ and communicated by the Holy Ghost. But these words of Our Lord show the extraordinary abundance with which the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost are dispensed since Christ sat down at the right hand of His Father. Private, limited, and hidden under the Old Law, this dispensation of graces is official, full, and manifest under the new Law. Those who believe in Christ receive with the Holy Ghost rivers of living water, the waves of which flow over their souls (St. John vii. 38, 39).

Why did Our Lord wait for the moment of His complete glorification before bestowing His grace with such profusion ? It would perhaps be difficult for us to unravel this mystery ; but at least we can enjoy the consolation and confidence with which this truth should fill us. " Where sin abounded, grace did more abound," says the Apostle (Rom. v. 20). We believe in Christ ; let us, then, thirst to refresh ourselves from those streams of living water which He pours out upon us so abundantly. " How few men there are," says Ignatius, " even if any can be found, who understand all that God would do for them, if they would only let Him !"

COLLOQUY.

Let us offer ourselves to Our Lord with our holy Mother Mary, that we may lead a really spiritual life ; and let us ask Him with confidence to make us feel the wonderful effects of that grace of the Holy Ghost, which cost Him so dear, and which He delights to pour with incomparable generosity into Christian souls. Let us conclude our meditation by addressing to the Holy Ghost the hymn of the Church,

Veni, Creator Spiritus.

FOURTH DAY : THE HOLY GHOST AND THE CHURCH.

Plan of the Meditation.—From the contemplation of the influence of the Holy Ghost on the human nature of the Word, we are naturally led to think of the two missions of the Holy Ghost of which that influence is a figure—the one, which is visible in the Church, the other, which is invisibly accomplished in the hearts of the faithful. The subject of the present meditation will be the visible mission of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and the object of the exercise will be to strengthen our attachment to that Church by a consideration of the many claims it has upon our affection. We shall consider how worthy it is of our love—(i.) *in its soul ;* (ii.) *in its ministry ;* (iii.) *in its authority.*

MEDITATION.

" Hæc cum dixisset, insufflavit, et dixit eis ; accipite Spiritum sanctum "—When he had said this, he breathed on them ; and He said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (St. John xx. 22).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the Cenacle in which the Apostles, assembled with Mary, saw the Holy Ghost descend upon them in the form of tongues of fire, while their souls were filled with a holy desire to preach the Gospel to the world.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for grace to understand better the relations of the Holy Ghost to the Church, in order that we may have that deep love for the Church which should characterize the true disciples of Jesus Christ.

I. The Church lovely in Her Soul.

I. One word is enough to make us understand that the soul of the Church is worthy of our love, beyond all human thought and expression. *The soul of the Church is the Holy Ghost.*

1. Guided by the Holy Ghost, Christ chose His Apostles, assembled His disciples, communicated His power, and founded a great mystical body, of which He Himself is the Head. But who is to animate that body?

According to the sublime language of Holy Scripture, God breathed the Spirit of life into the body, destined for the first man. Let us compare this scene of the Creation with the scene of the foundation of His Church by Our Lord. He has the fundamental elements of that Church before Him in the persons of His Apostles. "As My Father hath sent Me," He says, "even so send I you." What a mission! But it requires life, and what is to be the principle of that life? The breath of the God-Man will teach us. The Gospel tells us that, after the discourse to His Apostles, Jesus breathed upon them, and said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The first man must live and move, and he received the soul as the principle of his life and motion. The Church must live and move, and the breath of God Incarnate gives her, as the principle of her life and motion, the Holy Ghost. Do you not recognize the soul of the Church as she lives and moves? She lives to teach the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God alone can search (1 Cor. ii. 10); to bring forth children of God—they become His children by a grace which the Holy Ghost communicates by giving Himself (Rom. viii. 15); and she moves by spreading over

the world with the victorious force of the Spirit who " breatheth where He will " (St. John iii. 8).

2. The Church has a claim to our love from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love ; to which is added another claim, derived from her perfect union with her Head and Spouse, Jesus Christ. The first Adam, at the sight of his companion, mysteriously formed from himself, exclaimed, " This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh " (Gen. ii. 23), and Holy Scripture tells us, " Man and woman shall be two in one flesh " (Gen. ii. 24 ; Eph. v. 31). The second Adam must be joined to His mystical spouse, the Church, by an equally close union ; only here we are transported from matter to the domain of the Spirit. The Church comes forth, a new Eve, from the side of Christ, pierced by the lance ; and, thanks to the communication of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Jesus Christ becomes that of the Church, and thus Christ, gazing affectionately at His mystical spouse, may exclaim : " We are two in one and the same Spirit."

II. 1. How holy is the Church in Him who gives her her life ! How worthy of our admiration, our reverence, and our love !

2. Let us remember that the Christian soul, formed after the pattern of Jesus Christ, is also a reproduction of the Church in miniature. The same inspired hymn, the Canticle of Canticles, may be equally applied to the Blessed Virgin, the Church, and the Christian soul. It is for us also to show by our acts that we have one mind with Jesus Christ, for does not the inspired word tell us, " He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit "? (1 Cor. vi. 17).

II. The Church lovely in Her Ministry.

I. The ministry of the Church consists in sanctifying the souls of men by public prayer and sacrifice, and by the administration of the Sacraments. What claims upon our love the Holy Ghost has given her in these solemn functions !

1. How can we help loving the Church when we see her, like a tender mother, lifting her suppliant voice for all her children—for those who already belong to her, and for those whom she desires to bring forth to Jesus Christ? But this universal prayer opens the fountain of mercy, because it is the voice of her soul, the voice of the Holy Ghost, who "Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26).

The perfection of prayer, the supreme act of worship, is sacrifice. The sacrifice which the consecrated minister offers in union with the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, is of infinite value to give glory to God, and to bring down graces and gifts to men. It is the Holy Ghost who gives the priests to the Church, and it is under the action of the Holy Ghost that the sacrifice is offered.

2. With what supernatural charms the Church seems endowed, as, empurpled with love, she dispenses the Sacraments which derive their virtue from the blood of her Spouse! The influence of the Holy Ghost, who gives them their power, is continually brought to our minds in the Sacraments. In Baptism, man is born again of water and the Holy Ghost, in order to be admitted into the kingdom of God. Regenerated, but still in a state of spiritual infancy, the Christian presents himself before the Bishop, who, anointing him with the holy chrism, traces on his forehead the mark of the Holy Ghost. Confirmation is, as it were, a special Pentecost for every Christian. Endowed with strength and vigour, and capable of triumphing like the Angels, man, alas! succumbs at times in the struggle, and has his hours of defeat. But when he has fallen, he finds a priest who gives him the kiss of reconciliation with God the Holy Ghost, in the name of Christ, who gave this power to His Apostles. The same power which heals and pardons is exercised when the Church anoints the members of the sick man with the holy oil, and prays, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that the power of the Devil may be destroyed. In the adorable Sacrament of the Altar

what is our heavenly food ? The Body of the Incarnate God, which the mysterious operation of the Holy Ghost causes to be present on the altar, as it formed the same body in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Do two Christians contract a marriage which is recognized by God and the Church ? Their union is sanctified by the grace of the Holy Ghost, which they themselves communicate one to the other. Lastly, look at these Levites prostrate at the foot of the altar. Before the eyes of their relations and of the faithful assembled to witness the ordination of priests, the Bishop, three times laying his hands upon them, declares that the Holy Ghost imprints a new character upon their hearts.

II. If we thus recall, one after the other, the various ways by which, thanks to the Church and the Holy Ghost, who gives her her life, the most inestimable favours are showered down upon us ; if we apply to all our various needs the resources placed at our disposal by prayer and sacrifice and the Sacraments of the Church, we cannot fail to excite within ourselves a lively gratitude which trifling disappointments cannot diminish. May this result be produced by this second point of our meditation !

III. The Church lovely in Her Pastoral Office.

I. 1. At first sight it would seem that there is little to attract our love to the Church in an authority whose declarations may contradict our most cherished opinions, whose commandments may restrain our liberty of action, whose proceedings may irritate us, and may, perhaps, not always seem inspired by those holy and sublime motives which we expect to find in persons invested with a sacred character. There is the whole secret of man's opposition to the Church. It is explained by pride : it would cost a man little to submit to a God whom he does not see ; but he finds it hard to bow before the visible representatives of that God.

2. And yet how worthy is this same authority of our deepest affection!

(1) Let us consider its *source*—the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of love and truth creates the authority; entrusts to its keeping the deposit of the Scriptures which He has inspired; renders it infallible in its supreme judgments, and indefectible in its hierarchy; and constantly assists it with His light and grace.

(2) *Its Social Necessity.*—Without authority, Christian society would be impossible; Jesus Christ would not continue to be present in the visible body of which we are the members; deprived of all community of light, of help, and of merits, we should walk without guidance or company towards our eternal goal.

(3) *Its Acts, and their General Influence.*—They impose upon me an obedience which leads me towards Heaven, and already merits Heaven for me; they solve my difficulties, and relieve me from that distressing doubt which nowadays torments so many noble souls outside the Church; and they strengthen my steps in the path of justice.

To shake off the restraints of law, and act according to one's own pleasure, seems at first such delightful liberty. But it is a delusion, the victims of which are soon undeceived. They reject the servitude of justice, only to fall under the far heavier bondage of iniquity. The man who is the slave of his passions is unable to do what he would wish; his soul is unsatisfied, and he sighs for the power to set himself free. Without the Church it is impossible to preserve even that sum of duties which the social order appears to impose upon us. The very motives of these duties are soon called in question, and the articles of the moral code, deprived of the reason of their existence, are one by one discarded. See how little is left of them in some of the writings of the present day.

II. 1. Let us realize how dangerous it is to rebel against the authority of the Church. To resist the Church is to resist the Holy Ghost Himself. The first Council held in the time of the Apostles formu-

lated its decisions in these words : " It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us " (Acts xv. 28).

2. Let us endeavour, as true disciples of Christ, to have for the Church a love as great as the hatred of the wicked, and let us cling more closely to our Mother, because we see her deserted by ungrateful children. Let us examine our feelings towards the Church, that we may discover and correct the faults which may have lessened ever so little the sincerity of our affection.

COLLOQUY.

The Church is our Mother. Mary is our Mother, too, and before the Church ; and as man is a microcosm of Nature, a little world in himself, so Mary is a figure of the Church—the most beautiful figure that can be imagined. We shall find new motives for loving the Church, if we think of her whom the Church offers to our love and veneration, whom she proclaims as Queen of Apostles, and invokes as her most powerful protectress.

Through Mary let us offer to the Holy Ghost our firm resolutions to manifest an ever-increasing reverence and affection for the Church, the glorious Spouse of Jesus Christ !

FIFTH DAY : THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE JUST.

Plan of the Meditation.—We now approach a subject very dear to St. Paul, and frequently treated of in the homilies of the first centuries, but too much neglected by contemporary preachers. The cursory allusions which content the sacred orators of the present day are hardly enough to enable us to apprehend the dogma ; they do not at all suffice for its thorough appreciation. If the sublimity of the subject is such that it might strike us with awe, one passage of the Gospel restores our courage : " O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast

revealed them to little ones" (St. Luke x. 21). And we are told that Our Lord, while uttering these solemn words, "rejoiced in the Holy Ghost." Full of confidence in the grace of God, let us seek to strengthen our devotion to the Holy Ghost by this great truth, that God has chosen us for His temple.

Three meditations will be devoted to this subject, so important to our spiritual life. The first will contain a general view of the dogma; the second will give its theological explanation; and the third will complete the subject by a clear statement of the teaching of Holy Scripture concerning the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the just.

This first exercise will comprise three points—(1) *the immensity and omnipresence of God;* (2) *the special presence of God in the just;* (3) *the distance which separates God from sinners.*

MEDITATION.

"Si quis diligit me . . . ad eum veniemus et mansionem apud eum faciemus"—If any man love Me, . . . We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him (St. John xiv. 23).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Our Lord speaking these words to His Apostles, and especially to St. Jude.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for the grace to appreciate the gifts of God's infinite bounty.

I. The Immensity and Omnipresence of God.

I. 1. O God, how far Thy perfections surpass our understanding! We, born in time which existed before us, circumscribed by space which exceeds our dimensions, being here or there only by the contact of our bodies with other material substances, can only represent Thee, eternal, incomprehensible, omnipresent as Thou art, by images wholly unworthy of Thy perfection. Thy changeless eternity seems to us a succession of innumerable years; Thy incomprehensibility, a sea of which we can never reach the shores; Thy omnipresence, a multiplication of Thy-

self in an infinite number of situations which we imagine as similar to our own. "I thought Thee great," says St. Augustine, "O life of my life, with a greatness spread into infinite space, penetrating the whole mass of the world, so as to extend Thyself even beyond this universe, having neither limits nor boundaries."

2. Let us at once confess our inability to form any adequate conception of the reality. Vain are all our efforts to imagine the Divine immensity, that is the greatness proper to the Divine Being—greatness infinite, indivisible, as it is immeasurable and illimitable; greatness unchangeable, eternal, which God possesses independently of all creation. By this perfection God is necessarily present in an intimate manner in everything that exists, or has ever existed, or ever will exist.

From the *immensity* it is necessary to distinguish the Divine *omnipresence* of which it is the foundation: the *omnipresence* is the *actual* presence of God in everything that exists; it means that God is *everywhere;* His *essence* fills and contains everything; His *knowledge* knows everything intimately; His *omnipotence* is the first cause of all things. Our greatness is finite, and our bodies are in this or that place by the contact of their dimensions with those of other bodies. The greatness of God is infinite, and He is everywhere present by the contact of His *power*—a power which is unlimited, but varies its effects according to His good pleasure.

By reason of this variety it may be said that God is present to a greater extent in those places where His power is more exercised: He is present more in living beings than in inert masses, more in animals than in plants, more in reasonable beings than in creatures not endowed with reason.

II. Can we meditate upon this truth without calling to mind the words of the Psalmist, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into Hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in

the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me : and Thy right hand shall hold me" ? (Ps. cxxxviii. 7-10).

How terrible is this truth to the wicked, but how full of consolation to the just !

II. The Special Presence of God in the Just.

I. The formal teaching of Holy Scripture tells us of a special presence of God in the just. Let us listen with pious attention to these sublime and consoling lessons.

1. "*Si . . . non abiero, Paraclitus non veniet ad vos ; si autem abiero, mittam eum ad vos*"—If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you ; but if I go, I will send Him to you (St. John xvi. 7). "*Misit Deus Spiritum Filii sui in corda vestra clamantem, Abba, Pater*"—God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. iv. 6).

2. "*Si diligitis me, mandata mea servate. Et ego rogabo Patrem, et alium Paraclitum dabit vobis, ut maneat vobiscum in æternum, Spiritum veritatis, quem mundus non potest accipere, quia non videt eum, nec scit eum ; vos autem cognoscetis eum, quia apud vos manebit, et in vobis erit*"—If you love me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever ; the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him : but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you (St. John xiv. 15-17). "*Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*"—The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us (Rom. v. 5). "*Accepistis Spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus, Abba, Pater. Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro quod sumus filii Dei*"—You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God (Rom. viii. 15, 16).

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

3. "*Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit, et Pater meus diliget eum, et ad eum veniemus, et mansionem apud eum faciemus*"—If any man love Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him (St. John xiv. 23). "*An nescitis quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti qui in vobis est, quem habetis a Deo, et non estis vestri?*"—Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Cor. vi. 19). "*Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo*"—He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him (1 St. John iv. 16).

These texts of Holy Scripture, which we have divided into three groups, teach us that the Holy Ghost is *sent* to the just by the Father and the Son; that He is *given* to them; and that He *dwells* in them as in His own temple.

Let us consider the full meaning of these expressions.

(1) In announcing the *mission* of the Holy Ghost, our Blessed Lord calls forth all the ideas which would be suggested by the sending, not of an ordinary ambassador, but of a Divine Person, to fulfil a mandate of goodness, benevolence, and love; and imposes upon us the sweet and sacred duty of fostering within ourselves the sentiments to which such a truth gives rise. But the reality must be understood in a manner corresponding to the Divine perfections. The mission of the Holy Ghost does not imply a commission or mandate, properly so called, given to the Holy Ghost by the other two Divine Persons, but the accomplishment of a decree common to the Three Divine Persons, and appropriated to the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, as dictated by love. It does not suggest any change of place, or any other kind of change, in God Himself, but a transformation of the creature—a new manner in which God is present with him, the creature's acquisition of a new relationship with God.

(2) The *gift* of the Holy Ghost suggests the idea of

possession and enjoyment—the possession and enjoyment of God.

(3) The *indwelling* of the Holy Ghost suggests the existence of qualities, by reason of which He chooses and prefers their possessor above other creatures, and desires to take up His habitation with him. The habitation as in a temple suggests the idea of consecration. The temple is destined for worship: it is in a temple that God delights to receive the homage of His creatures, and to answer their prayers. Thus the whole universe is a magnificent temple, whose pillars are the mountains, and its vaulted roof the starry firmament, where everything that lives and moves and rejoices should glorify God and speak of Him, and tend towards Him. Yet, in spite of its splendour, this temple cannot be compared to the living temple which every man is who is in favour with God.

II. If we consider these expressions and their full meaning, we cannot help being confounded at being at once so little and so great—so little in our own personal worth, so great in our destiny and our mission. Oh, that this thought might show us the necessity for gratitude and purity, for fervent homage and devotion! What is a dwelling where the principal guest is forgotten? What is a treasure which is not enjoyed, or a temple in which no prayer is offered up?

III. The Distance which separates God from Sinners.

I. In contrast with this great privilege of the just, let us consider the miserable position of those men who are in a state of sin. The same God, intimately present in all things, has found in His love a way of coming near to the just, and His justice keeps Him far from sinners. The sinner is in a threefold manner far from God.

(1) Far from God in being deprived of the privilege of the just, in whom God dwells in a special manner.

He fails in the requisite condition : " *Si quis diligit me* "—If any man love Me.

(2) Far from God in being excluded from the happy number of those who are specially known to Him. That knowledge He reserves, as the highest mark of His approbation and the source of His benevolence, to those who truly belong to Him. " The Lord knoweth who are His " (2 Tim. ii. 19), but to those whom He is about to reject He begins by saying : " Amen, I say to you ; I know you not " (St. Matt. xxv. 12).

3) Far from God in being separated from Him by moral dissimilarity, which puts him at a greater distance than even material things. " The Lord is far from the wicked " (Prov. xv. 29). Speaking of his own sinful life, St. Augustine says : " I was far from the Lord in the land of unlikeness." We do not say of any material creature that it is far from God ; for at least none of them are opposed to Him.

II. Many men regulate their moral conduct only by the fears and hopes of the future. Let us avoid this fatal error, for even in this world how sad are the effects produced by sin !

COLLOQUY.

Let us turn to Mary, the richest temple that the Holy Ghost ever formed for Himself among human creatures, and implore her to help us to show our gratitude to God, to invoke Him with confidence and love, so that no unworthy conduct of ours may displease the Holy Ghost who comes to be the guest of our souls !

Veni, Creator Spiritus.

SIXTH DAY : THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST, THE ADMIRABLE EFFECT OF SANCTIFYING GRACE.

Plan of the Meditation.—We have listened with reverent gratitude to the words of God. We shall understand their full meaning only in Heaven, but

by following the most eminent theologians we may endeavour to give such explanation as is accessible to us on earth. All writers on this subject agree in connecting the indwelling of the Holy Ghost with sanctifying grace, though they differ in their ways of establishing this connection.

But if there is only one true solution of the problem, even imperfect attempts help to make it better understood, and throw light on those magnificent aspects of the grace which makes us the adopted children of God ; and therefore, before considering, in the third point of our meditation, the explanation most commonly accepted, which is that of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, we shall, in the first two points, contemplate the other excellent qualities which sanctifying grace really possesses, though we cannot explain thereby the special presence with which God favours the just. We shall, therefore, consider—(1) *sanctifying grace and the operations of God ;* (2) *sanctifying grace and its Divine attractions ;* (3) *sanctifying grace and the special presence of God.*

MEDITATION.

" Pone me ut signaculum supra cor tuum "—Put me as a seal upon thy heart (Cant. viii. 6).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Our Lord sitting on the edge of the well at Sichar, and exciting in the heart of the Samaritan woman an earnest desire to know and receive the health-giving water springing up into life everlasting. *" Si scires donum Dei !"*—If tho didst know the gift of God ! (St. John iv. 10).

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray God that we may have a greater reverence and desire for His wonderful gifts.

I. Sanctifying Grace and the Operations of God.

I. 1. As we have seen, God is intimately present in all things by the effects that He produces in them ; He multiplies Himself, so to speak, with the effects

themselves. Now, the most sublime effect of His power is that which produces in us sanctifying grace and the supernatural gifts which follow it. To be in us, sustaining and preserving habitual grace and virtues, exciting us to all our supernatural actions, is a greater work than to preserve the existence and energy of the whole visible universe. Moreover, this sanctifying grace, because it is an intimate friendship with God, ensures to us the affectionate protection which we have the right to expect from faithful friends. So long as we remain in favour with God, His thoughts are constantly directed towards our welfare. Some modern writers have come to the conclusion that these tokens of bounty and protection constitute a special presence of God in the just, who alone receive them.

II. 1. They were mistaken. New operations, however magnificent they may be, belong always to that kind of presence by which God is in all things by the effects of His power. If He is present to a greater extent in the places where He works greater effects, we may infer that He is more in the just than elsewhere, but not in any specifically new manner.

2. But when we extol the greatness of God's generosity towards the just, and the special protection He extends to them, this thought (1) increases our gratitude to God. In return for such munificent gifts and such constant care we should offer generous sacrifices, with a scrupulous and constant care to please Him, and an ardent desire to promote His interest; (2) Reveals to us the secret of the confidence in God, which was the special characteristic of the Saints. In the same degree in which grace and virtues were developed in them, the friendship also grew, which permitted them to trust to God for everything. They knew Him; how could they doubt or fear?

II. Sanctifying Grace and its Divine Charms.

I. 1. Sanctifying grace is the gift of a Divine friendship, which could not be conceived as existing if God had not the will to be present with us. Take

away from God His immensity, and sanctifying grace would appeal to Him in such a manner as to draw Him irresistibly into our hearts. The soul in a state of grace would claim His presence, would say with the Bride in the Canticle of Canticles: "Show me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day. . . . I sought Him, and found Him not; I called and He did not answer me" (Cant. i. 6, v. 6); and God would be unable to resist such pleading.

2. This irresistible charm which sanctifying grace possesses for God appeared to Suarez and other writers to give a special character to the presence of God in the Angels and men in a state of grace.

II. 1. Rather than a specially different presence, these theologians discovered a new reason, necessitating in the just the substantial presence in all things, which God possesses by reason of His immensity.

2. Their conclusions are none the less magnificent and touching.

(1) Could we ever suppose that our company, which is sometimes wearisome to our equals, would be desired by God Himself? that God could make our souls so beautiful that they could have attraction even for Him?

What consolation we may find in this thought, if sometimes we are overcome by a feeling of loneliness!

(2) How eloquently this Divine gift tells me that, for love of God, I must willingly accept society not altogether congenial to me. In every man whom I call *my neighbour* faith enables me to discover either grace itself, or the vocation to grace. This soul may have attractions for God; and can I say that to me it is an object of dislike?

III. Sanctifying Grace and the Special Presence of God.

Preliminary Remarks.—In spite of the opinion of distinguished theologians, we follow the opinion more generally accepted, according to which the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is not considered as

proper to that Divine Person, but as simply appropriated, and belonging to all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Does not Our Lord say that He and His Father will make their abode with those who love Him ? (St. John xiv. 23). No doubt the grace to which this indwelling is attached gives us a reason for attributing this to the Holy Ghost ; but is not that grace, on the other hand, an exterior work of God, common to the three Divine Persons ? We shall therefore speak indifferently of the special presence of *God* or of the *Holy Ghost*.

I. 1. Let us imagine two friends, united by a pure and intimate affection. Their mutual love assures to each the protection of the other ; they seek opportunities of meeting ; they delight in each other's society. And their meetings are not like those of men who hold opposite opinions, or are simply indifferent to each other. In all their intercourse each of the two friends enjoys the other, each feels that the other belongs to him.

2. Not one of these characteristics is wanting in the friendship which, by a singular favour, sanctifying grace establishes between God and the just man. This friendship permits us to count on a special protection of God, on a special Providence ; it would attract God to us, if we were not already penetrated by the Divine immensity ; moreover, it gives us the possession, the enjoyment, of God, so far as our condition allows it. This *possession of God*, which is attached to sanctifying grace, constitutes the special presence which is the privilege of the just, and which they alone can enjoy.

At the end of our earthly trial the enjoyment is full and complete. Lift your eyes to Heaven, and behold the elect who see God face to face. Is not the special presence of God manifest in the sweet ecstasy of the beatific vision ? This full enjoyment, this complete possession of God, is begun here below in the infused virtues which accompany sanctifying grace, that health-giving water, springing forth to life everlasting. The happiness of Heaven is the fruit of that friendship with God which we have

formed by sanctifying grace and charity; the reward which is due to the man who has passed through the present trial. And while we are waiting here, God allows Himself to be possessed by the just by means of faith, which will one day give place to sight, and of charity, which will last through all eternity, in a manner in which He can never be possessed by sinners. The soul, which believes in Him with a faith which is crowned by charity *possesses its God*, and it depends on that soul itself whether that best of friends ever leaves it. It possesses Him, and in the dim light that we have at present on all things supernatural, a firm assurance of the reality and the value of the friendship of God brings us unspeakable consolations, and gives that peace of the Holy Ghost which surpasses all other happiness. That assurance, indeed, consoling as it is, has not the certainty of faith; it is not always felt—the subject may even be incapable of feeling it—but God is no less really and specially present.

Ah! do not tell me that we can know and love at a distance. This knowledge by faith and this love of charity are not the knowledge and love of a friend far away, but of a friend whom I know to be intimately present within me; and, moreover, I cannot know and love thus except by a special intervention of Him whom I love, and who intends to give Himself by this knowledge and this love, as a friend gives himself in making himself seen and loved. Do not tell me that those who have not the faith may know and love God, or that sinners preserve the faith. By this natural knowledge and love, and by this faith, these unbelievers and sinners do not attain to the possession of God, as if He were their happiness and their supreme end. Imagine a stranger present at the interview of two intimate friends; he may take part in their conversation, but he is excluded from their friendship, he has no part in their enjoyment. Neither of the two friends is the same to him as they are to one another. Will you contend that an infant possesses grace without either knowing or loving? The fact that the infant cannot make acts of faith or

charity does not prevent the existence of habitual faith or charity with grace in the soul ; that soul has a right to the Divine assistance in making such acts as soon as it is able to do so ; and if it quitted the body, the full enjoyment of God would prove how entirely the Lord is present in that soul even now. God is near that child, as one friend may be near another who is asleep or in delirium. He does not feel that he is in the presence of a stranger ; he shows a special interest in his unconscious friend, and lavishes upon him his care and attention, and in the heart of that man, who, by reason of his sleep or his malady, is unaware of the presence of his friend, we can read the habitual sentiment of affection, which only awaits his awakening or his cure in order to be made manifest and active.

The special presence of God in the just is thus described by St. Thomas Aquinas : " God is in them as one who is known and loved is in him who knows and loves him." It is the special presence of friendship. God is intimately present everywhere by virtue of His immensity, but specially present in the just, possessed by faith and charity, which sanctifying grace always brings with it. This presence is continual, for God does not cease to be there, and sanctifying grace does not cease to make this possession certain. The words of Scripture are fulfilled : " If any man love Me "—that is, if he correspond to that grace which I give him to love Me—" My Father will love him " —will give back love for love ; and " We will come to him " — Our presence shall be henceforth that of a friend who gives himself—" and We will make our abode with him" — that presence shall continue without interruption as long as the friendship itself.

II. 1. How far less intimate is the presence of one friend with another than this presence of God, which alone can penetrate our souls ; the meetings of friends, necessarily interrupted, and often entirely prevented, are far more rare than this contact with God, which may be continual ; and how imperfect is the enjoyment which any mortal being can give in comparison

with that perfect happiness which the Immortal God reserves for His faithful followers !

2. Now that we have dwelt at some length on the presence of God in us, and the unspeakable blessing of His friendship, let us turn our thoughts to a truth that we can never sufficiently appreciate. Our happiness presupposes not only the love of God for us, but our love for Him. Oh, the goodness of God, who allows Himself to be loved by us ! Without knowing Him, without loving Him, it is impossible to possess God or to enjoy Him. Even in loving God we possess Him. Friendship is essentially a mutual love. God may love me, but if He does not permit me to love Him, He may give me other blessings, but He never gives me Himself. All else is worthless, save only God, known and loved ; for all else is nothing but the creature. Let us fervently thank God for allowing Himself to be loved.

COLLOQUY.

Let us first observe, with reverent admiration, how even here on earth God was more perfectly with Mary than with any other created being.

There are two presences of God which admit of increase—the one which depends on the effects produced, and the other which is associated with the friendship of God. After the hypostatic union of a human nature with a Divine Person, nothing is more worthy of admiration than the Divine Maternity of Mary. It required the presence of God still more than simple friendship ; it covered Mary with an altogether exceptional protection, and conferred upon her a supereminent degree of sanctifying grace, and not only permitted, but demanded of her in return, more intense affection than that of all other intelligent creatures.

" The Lord is with thee !" Let us repeat the salutation of the Angel Gabriel, and implore our dear Mother to obtain for us that true wisdom which asks for something better than all the treasures of this

world, which long for the inestimable blessing of a greater love of God. Let us imagine this great God Himself, who permits us to use the simple language of affection, asking us this question which we read of in some of the lives of the Saints : " What reward dost thou desire ?" Will it be hard for us to answer, as the Saints answered : " No reward but Thee only, O Lord " ?

Veni, Sancte Spiritus.

SEVENTH DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE BODY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—Holy Scripture extends to the body itself the privilege and the admirable effects of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Let us, then, set ourselves to meditate on these deep and sanctifying lessons. St. Paul will supply us with matter for the three points of our meditation—(1) *the consecration of the body by the Holy Ghost ;* (2) *the honour done to our bodies, and their future resurrection ;* (3) *our duty to glorify God in our bodies.*

MEDITATION.

" An nescitis quoniam membra vestra, templum sunt Spiritus Sancti, qui in vobis est, quem habetis a Deo, et non estis vestri ? Empti enim estis pretio magno "— Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own ? For you are bought with a great price (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the scene of the baptism of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost hovers above His head in the form of a dove, indicating that He has taken possession of Jesus.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to understand the dignity which consecrates the body of the Christian, and to acquire from that knowledge a reverence which shall perfect our purity.

I. The Consecration of the Body by the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost gives Himself to our souls by faith and charity, and at the same time claims our bodies as His own, and makes them His temple. We shall consider this *claim* and this *consecration*.

I. 1. *The Claim.*—"You are bought with a great price," says the Apostle. God, by the mere fact of Creation, is the Sovereign Lord and Master of all things—of our bodies, as of everything else. But Holy Scripture shows us how supreme are the rights of His love. We belonged to God by our origin, but were as though lost to Him by sin. The Incarnation was decreed in order to put an end to the lamentable situation of man, created for God, and yet unable to reach Him. The Son of God, made man for us, redeemed us by His blood, freed us from the slavery of the devil, and acquired us for the love of that God whose supreme condescension gave us our Redeemer. Can any claim be stronger or more touching than this?

2. (1) Let us recognize the force of the rights of God, in order that we may admit them and religiously observe them. In claiming our bodies, God shows us that, unless we wish to insult Him, we are bound to accept the inestimable favour which He offers us of sending to us His Holy Spirit. But this obligation, which puts an end to all our doubts, is in itself a priceless boon. Let us imagine ourselves addressed by God, while He is pleased to display all His munificence. "I offer you," He says, "My Holy Spirit, to possess and to keep." While we are so overwhelmed with this honour that we are unable to reply, He continues: "Even if you hesitate, I demand your obedience. Your bodies are doubly Mine: I am their Creator and Master, and I have paid for them with the blood of My Son."

(2) We belong wholly to God. In this sense let us understand the words of St. Paul: "*Non estis vestri*"—You are not your own. This is the answer to give to all temptations; it is not for me to hesitate about the use or destiny of my members or my

faculties. They do not belong to me : they belong to Him who redeemed them by His blood, and keeps them by His Holy Spirit. This is the answer the virgins gave to their persecutors. Let us have no other answer to all the suggestions of the enemy.

Let us meditate at length on the force of this reason, strengthened, perhaps, by promises and vows, and let us conclude.

II. 1. *The Consecration.*—This body belongs to the Holy Ghost. To what use does the Holy Ghost destine His property ? He makes it His temple. This is the formal teaching of the Apostle : " Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." [The Vulgate says, " *Your members*"; but the original Greek is *your body*, or *your bodies*, τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν, or τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν.]

The temple reminds us of God ; in the temple we call upon God. Our body is consecrated to this double purpose—consecrated by God Himself, and not by any human will ; consecrated in virtue, not of an arbitrary choice, but of an essential bond which joins the body to a soul which possesses God. Since, in being joined to the Lord, our soul is the same spirit with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17), our body serves at the same time as the habitation of the Holy Ghost and of our own soul ; it is the temple in which all our spiritual sacrifices are made. And this consecration is final ; we shall see that it endures for all eternity.

2. (1) Being chosen for His temple by the Spirit of holiness, our body is holy. " The temple of God is holy, which you are " (1 Cor. iii. 17). It ought, therefore, to inspire us with a great reverence, with something of that feeling which animated the father of Origen when he kissed the breast of his sleeping child as a sort of sanctuary of the Holy Ghost.

(2) Let us always keep our bodies for the holy use to which they were consecrated.

(3) It is said that the sight of the Blessed Virgin excited in the beholders an ardent devotion towards God, and that all who found themselves in the company of St. Aloysius Gonzaga or of St. John Berchmans were attracted to purity. What a blessed

influence to exert over others! We, too, may exert the same influence, but for this we need a perfect chastity, great sobriety, and simple, dignified modesty of demeanour.

(4) Let us take care by exercises of piety and generous offering of ourselves to practise that private and interior devotion of which our bodies are to be the living temples, as buildings of stone are the temples of public and external worship; and the Holy Ghost will dictate to us those fitting prayers, those "unspeakable groanings," which will assuredly be heard.

II. The Honour done to Our Bodies, and Their Future Resurrection.

I. 1. This choice of God is an *immense honour*. To impress this upon us more strongly, St. Paul teaches us that it is the work of all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Let us consider the text of our meditation. (1) The Father, who is the Author of every perfect gift, gives us the Holy Ghost. "*Habetis a Deo*," says the Apostle—You have Him from God. (2) The Son buys our bodies at the price of His own blood, or, rather, buys them back, saving them from the devil. *Empti estis pretio magno*—You are bought with a great price. (3) The Holy Ghost comes, given by the Father, into the dwelling acquired at the price of the blood of the Son; and this dwelling is our body!

2. Let us show our gratitude to God, and let all our thoughts, sentiments, and desires be worthy of the dignity conferred upon us.

II. 1. In imposing great duties upon us, the Holy Ghost at the same time confers upon us *magnificent privileges*. He condescends to make Himself the pledge of the resurrection of our bodies.

(1) By His presence He assures us of this resurrection. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11). "You were signed with the Holy

Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 13, 14). The flesh perishes, because it has been in slavery to sin; what wonder, then, that it should rise again because it has served the Spirit of God?

(2) The body which will rise again will be a renewed, transfigured body, no longer shaped for the natural activity of the soul, but worthy of the Holy Ghost. The first man, being earthly himself, could give only an earthly body, subject to all the necessities of natural life; but the Second Adam communicates to us a heavenly life, and prepares for us a body worthy of that supernatural life, the principle of which is the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xv. 42, 44).

2. If the consecration of the Holy Ghost follows our bodies even into the dust, if those ashes are not finally extinguished, if they contain a mysterious germ of immortality, the reverence which we show to the body must survive death itself, and accompany our dead into the grave. This is the cause of the veneration we pay to the relics of the Saints; this is the reason why, since the first ages, Christian funerals have been surrounded with honour, why all Christians desire to rest after death beneath the shadow of the same sign of victory, by the side of their brethren who share the same hope with themselves. The violence of wicked men has too often deprived Catholics of this consolation and profaned their cemeteries. Let us, then, be all the more careful to maintain in ourselves and in those around us that religious reverence for the bodies of baptized Christians which is due to the dead, and which purifies and sanctifies the living.

III. Our Duty to Glorify God in Our Bodies.

St. Paul himself lays stress on the twofold duty which his teaching further develops. *No profanation! Glory to God in His temple!*

I. 1. *No Profanation!*—A holy awe should keep us

on our guard against the violation of the temple of the Holy Ghost by the sin of impurity. By impure acts, says the Apostle, the Christian sins against his body, and violates the temple of God ; and he warns us that " if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy " (1 Cor. iii. 17).

2. This same care of the sanctity of the temple should lead Christians to be careful to contract only such holy unions as permit them to lead a spiritual life. Too often, when marriages are arranged, temporal advantages alone are considered, to the neglect of the affairs of eternity ; marriage is a union of names rather than of hearts, and the happiness of an alliance founded on a common faith and a common practice of virtue is forgotten. Let us regulate our actions according to the spirit of St. Paul and the Church. The Apostle recommended those to whom he wrote not to be united to those who were unbaptized (1 Cor. vii. 39), and the Church loves her children too dearly to approve of unions which in no way resemble that which unites her to Jesus Christ.

II. *Glory to God in His Temple !*—" Glorify and bear God in your body," says St. Paul (1 Cor. vi. 20). This glory is given by the service of God, by works of faith rendered active by charity, and by the testimony which a holy life gives to the Divine perfections.

COLLOQUY.

1. Let us reverence the counsels of God. He sanctifies even our bodies, and discovers to us a reason of holiness, even in our flesh. How admirable are the ways of God ! The clay bursts into flame, the unclean is made clean, that which once made us bow down with shame now invites us to lift up our heads, that which once dragged us down into the mire now encourages us to rise. Let us adore the wisdom of God, and praise Him for His goodness.

2. But how great is our responsibility ! It increases with the new advances which God makes to us. Let us have recourse to Mary, who so abundantly glorified God in her body by bringing forth

the humanity of the Word, and ask her prayers that our bodies may be the living sacrifice, holy and pleasing unto God, which St. Paul exhorted the Christians of Rome to offer as a spiritual oblation (Rom. xii. 1) ; and let us conclude our exercise with a grateful invocation of the Holy Ghost.

Veni, Creator Spiritus.

EIGHTH DAY : DEVOTION TO THE HOLY GHOST AND THE PRESENT TIME.

Plan of the Meditation.—There are three principal reasons for practising and propagating devotion to the Holy Ghost in opposition to the three great evils of the spirit of the age in which we live ; it gives us the humility suitable to our condition in contrast with the mad pride of the world, a desire for eternal happiness in contrast with the restless pursuit of temporal pleasures, and the fruit of holiness in contrast with moral corruption, and thus delivers us from the fatal snares of *rationalism*, *materialism*, and *sensuality*. These three contrasts will form the three points of our meditation.

MEDITATION.

" *Multi enim ambulant, quos sæpe dicebam vobis* (*nunc autem et flens dico*), *inimicos crucis Christi. . . . Nostra autem conversatio in cœlis est*"—*For many walk, of whom I have told you often* (*and now tell you weeping*) *that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ. . . . But our conversation is in heaven* (Phil. iii. 18, 20).

First Prelude. — Let us imagine Heaven at the moment when thousands of Angels find themselves for ever excluded, while the victorious legions of St. Michael make their glorious entry therein.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask the grace that by fervent devotion to the Holy Ghost we may raise ourselves above the ills and temptations of the present life.

I. Devotion to the Holy Ghost and Rationalism.

I. 1. Let us briefly recall the history of a world which was created before our own. It is composed of Angels, radiant with the beauty and happiness of a purely spiritual nature. God, who created them, reserves for them a still more glorious destiny; He wills that they shall find their happiness, not in themselves, but in Him; He invites them to His feast, and makes it a duty for them to accept His invitation.

While most of them are prepared gratefully to enjoy this inestimable privilege, others give way to pride, and think they are sufficient for themselves; they neglect God's gifts, and despise His magnificent offers; they refuse to accept their destiny from the hand of God, and insist on choosing their own, less noble, no doubt, but satisfying their own ambition. All this is sinful rebellion against the absolute dominion of God; senseless pride, which forgets the universal dependence of creatures upon their Creator.

What follows? They lose not only the supernatural bliss which they refuse, but even the natural happiness with which they pretend to be content. For them the abyss of Hell is created, into which they are cast for ever.

2. Their lot is fixed irrevocably; but God created a new world, in which man is King. One would think that the weakness, the frailty, the sinfulness, of human nature, especially since the fall of man, would make impossible all thoughts of pride, all such ambition as that which brought the wicked angels to their ruin; and yet, what do we see? Men, called in their turn to possess the kingdom of Heaven, are divided into two classes—some promptly and gratefully obey the call of their Creator, while others declare that they will have none of His gifts. Some men dare to assert their right to refuse God's offers, and take refuge in natural religion, with no truths except such as reason reveals, no duties except such as their own conscience dictates, no prayers, for God owes it to Himself to satisfy the demands of our

nature without waiting for our petitions. Such is the rationalism which the Sovereign Pontiffs have denounced as the great evil of modern society, and the chief error disseminated by Freemasonry.

All pride, all self-sufficiency, are out of place in any creature ; but how much more in man than in the Angels ! The Angel gazes directly on that truth which men must laboriously deduce from the scanty evidence vouchsafed them ; the Angel does not feel the temptations which beset men ; the Angel had not before his fall the teaching of an experience which every day confirms, all the past and present history of doubt and uncertainty, the fatal result of unbelief.

3. In contrast to this pride, devotion to the Holy Ghost appears to us like the grateful hymn of the soul illumined by heavenly light ; it teaches us to love this Divine call which rationalism rejects, and to place all our glory in the Lord.

II. 1. Let us put far from us this unseemly pride, and thank God for His light, His help, and His plans for our welfare.

2. Without being actually guilty of rationalism, many Christians show a tendency towards it by neglecting the counsels of grace in order to follow their own designs—at least, in matters in which God has not given any positive command. Such are the counsels relating to the choice of a state of life, and the desires of God which are made known by the opportunities He gives us of doing good. What blessings we throw away when we refuse to correspond to the impulses of grace ! Let us imitate the Blessed Virgin, who showed herself in all things the handmaid of the Lord.

II. Devotion to the Holy Ghost and Materialism.

I. 1. How great is a soul which is detached from this world and raised to God ! " If God has made it rich," says St. Cyprian, " no one can make it poor.

Famine is impossible to a heart which is fed on heavenly food." But, alas! so many men limit their desires with ever-increasing obstinacy to the pleasures and enjoyments of the present life—a terrible lesson for those who are banished from the enchanted land of pleasure by sickness or infirmity, but sad, also, for those who enter therein! How little they gain, and for how short a time!

2. Devotion to the Holy Ghost teaches us to value and cultivate the seed of future happiness which is sown in our hearts. It bids us rise above the vanities of this world, and think of the bliss of Heaven; it keeps alive within us the memory of the Divine promises, and of that Heaven in which we have the rights of citizenship.

II. 1. Mary led in perfection this life of detachment from the things of earth. Though the daughter of David, she willingly bore poverty and obscurity, in the hope of a better—that is to say, a heavenly—country.

2. Let us follow her example, and moderate all our desires of the present. "The chains of this world," says St. Augustine, "are light only in appearance, but they are cruelly heavy in reality; uncertain is the pleasure they promise, but certain the pain they cause; they reward our hard toil only by a rest full of anxiety; they bring much real misery, but no hope of happiness." If we renounce these unsatisfying joys, we shall save ourselves from bitter disappointments, and instead of trouble and anxiety, we shall find true, solid peace.

III. Devotion to the Holy Ghost and the Corruption of the Age.

I. 1. In those whose affections are always set on earthly things, the higher aspirations are like limbs which become atrophied by want of exercise; they are weakened and extinguished, while the lower desires increase continually in force and intensity. A man who rebels against God becomes the slave of his passions; his mind discovers depths of degrada-

tion not suspected by unreasoning beings, and he ends by wallowing therein. What misery, what profanation! We hear around us excuses made for every kind of sin, and if theory sinks so low, what must the practice be?

2. Devotion to the Holy Ghost raises the soul above the allurements of the passions. The noisy and trivial voices of the street are hushed at the threshold of the temple whose dignity overawes us. We are that temple. Devotion to the Holy Ghost teaches us to respect the holiness of His sanctuary.

II. Mary rose superior to all earthly desires; all her passions were religiously subdued, and her whole life passed in communion with God. Let us imitate her, and strive to attain the same holy superiority by devotion to grace and the Holy Ghost.

COLLOQUY.

In the colloquy let us continue our contemplation of the contrast between these two worlds—the one full of pride, steeped in the grossest materialism, the other humble, setting its affections on things above. The hour will come when all that is best and noblest in human nature will turn away from the first to seek salvation in the second. It is for us to be here below the representatives of that nobler world, and to offer to souls which are capable of elevation the attractive spectacle of its beauty and splendour. Let us invoke the Holy Ghost, and ask Him to give us a greater relish for heavenly things.

> "*Veni, Creator Spiritus,*
> *Infunde amoren cordibus.*"
>
> "Come, O Creator, Spirit blest,
> And make our hearts o'erflow with love."

NINTH DAY: THE HOLY GHOST AND HIS THREEFOLD MISSION.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The Holy Ghost, by His graces, His gifts, and His presence, fulfils towards us a threefold mission, which is described in Holy

Scripture, and by which, as Leo XIII. explains in his Encyclical *Divinum illud*, He crowns the work of redemption which Jesus Christ entrusted to him to complete. We have already considered the nature of this sublime mission, but it may well be made the subject of a special meditation, and we shall, therefore, consider the Holy Ghost as—(1) our *Intercessor;* (2) our *Comforter;* (3) our *Teacher.*

MEDITATION.

"*Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro, quod sumus filii Dei*"—*For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God* (Rom. viii. 16).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves in the company of the Apostles at the moment when Our Lord teaches them that sublime prayer, the *Our Father,* or when, after the Last Supper, He prepares them for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for an abundant communication of the Holy Spirit, and grace to follow constantly the guidance of that Divine Guest.

I. The Holy Ghost Our Intercessor.

Preliminary Remarks.—The Holy Ghost is God, and God only; He could not, therefore, intervene between God and man, like Jesus Christ, who is both God and man; nor could He, properly speaking, plead our cause. The intercession which we attribute to the Holy Ghost is made in us and by us; it is not distinct from our own: it is truly our own, and grace takes a principal part in it. We can now, without fear of misunderstanding, enter upon our subject.

I. 1. The Divine plan in respect of the dispensation of grace makes prayer an absolute necessity. Not only does prayer well made obtain all that is really profitable to us, but in important or difficult cases prayer is the only means we have of obtaining the

strength we need, whether to practise acts of virtue or to overcome violent temptations. The grace to do good or to resist the enemy is not always granted to us immediately, but the grace to pray is always offered to us, and in praying we obtain the power to do what we were unable to do before.

2. *The Grace to Pray.*—This expression by itself reveals to us the intervention of the Holy Ghost in our prayers. If we had to depend on our own natural resources, how could we formulate the prayers which should bring down supernatural favours, and apply to us the merits of Jesus Christ? No prayer worthy of the name is made without the grace of the Holy Ghost. This Divine Guest of our hearts supplies the power to pray well, which we should otherwise have lacked.

3. The Apostle St. Paul calls our attention to another aspect of our infirmity. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. viii. 26). Our Lord, it is true, has taught us what should be the general tendency of all our prayers and supplications: the Our Father is a sublime expression of all legitimate desires. But in order to determine what blessings we should pray for, do we know exactly what would be good for us at every moment and in all circumstances? Is it good for us that we should know?

Yes, lest we make prayers which God cannot answer, and the rejection of which might weaken our piety. Yes, once more, in order that we may put aside all doubt and hesitation, and direct towards an end which we have clearly in view those persevering and confident efforts to which the greatest favours are attached.

This is how, according to the Apostle, the Holy Ghost comes to our aid. He turns our thoughts away from apparent blessings which would be useless, and even hurtful, and communicates to us a holy fervour in imploring the infinite goodness of God to grant us more precious gifts, in entreating Him with prayers which He understands better than we do ourselves, and which, if made as He would have them

made, are sure to be heard. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity," says St. Paul; "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth, because He asketh for the Saints according to God" (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

II. 1. What is more important or more useful than to fill our lives with those good prayers which obtain for us the fulfilment of all our best desires, and all the help we need? A fuller realization of the assistance of the Holy Ghost in our prayers will increase our confidence and fervour. How can we refuse to give our best attention to a work in which God thus takes us by the hand in order to promise us every blessing?

2. The whole lives of many men would be completely changed if they would give more time to serious and earnest prayer. God desires nothing so much as to "pour out the spirit of grace and of prayers upon the house of David" (Zach. xii. 10), for which Christ shed His blood. But we must not be content with half-hearted prayers, or we can never hope to make progress in holiness. Let us avoid all voluntary distractions, and implore the Holy Ghost to be our Divine teacher, and instruct us in the great art of praying well.

II. The Holy Ghost Our Comforter.

I. 1. Our Lord Himself announced the Holy Spirit to His Apostles as another Paraclete or Comforter, whom He would send to be with them for ever (St. John xiv. 16). How often are we reminded of this mission of comfort in the New Testament! How frequently St. Paul invites us to draw from the stream of ineffable joy and peace which flows from the Holy Ghost! St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, thus describes the extent of His influence: "The Church had peace throughout all Judea and Galilee and

Samaria, and was edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and was filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 31).

2. We need a double consolation, in view of our wants, and the dangers that surround us—consolation for the troubles that are inseparable from our life on earth, and for the want of the blessings of Heaven, which as yet we do not possess.

In all these times of sadness the Holy Ghost can and will be our great comforter.

(1) As a friend always present within us, He offers us, if we have a living faith, all the consolations that can be given by the most sublime and most intimate friendship.

(2) He shows us the frailty and vanity of earthly pleasures, and the powerlessness of all earthly evils to hurt us.

(3) As the seal of our redemption, the pledge of our future inheritance, He not only promises us a happiness with which no other happiness can be compared, but He soothes our distress, and permits us to enjoy to the fullest extent the hope of future bliss.

(4) His light, His strength, all His gifts, turn our present poverty into spiritual riches. In all circumstances God may say to us, as He said to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9).

II. Let us examine ourselves, that we may see how far we place our hopes on created things, how far we are influenced by the chances and changes of this life. Let us exercise our faith, and turn for help to the Holy Ghost, and so raise our courage by the certain prospect of complete freedom from all our troubles.

III. The Holy Ghost Our Teacher.

I. Our Lord tells us, "the Holy Ghost will teach you all things" (St. John xiv. 26). Let us try to realize the full meaning of these words.

(1) Our Lord came, in His human nature, to instruct us by His word and example, and to give us by His wonderful miracles the proofs of His Divine mission. But the faith He taught must find believers, and the duties He preached must be fulfilled by obedient disciples.

It is by the grace of the Holy Ghost that the Church preserves and transmits intact the deposit of Divine truth ; it is by this grace also that man arrives at the truth, and renews his acts of faith ; and it is by the same grace that he forms and carries out his resolution to live according to the teaching of Christ. Whether there is a question of holiness necessary to salvation, or of higher perfection, both the firm purpose and the practical work are the result of the individual soul's acceptance of the teaching of Christ, and this acceptance is the work of the Holy Ghost. The words which Our Lord addressed to His Apostles apply also to us : " He will bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you " (St. John xiv. 26).

(2) But we who are called to the friendship of God must not fulfil His commandments in a half-hearted manner. To give an unwilling obedience in a spirit of slavish fear is unworthy of the adoption with which God honours us. Friendship should establish a complete concord, should give to man the same sentiments that are in God ; the Divine law should really be written in our hearts. This is the marvellous work accomplished by the Holy Ghost, through whom we have that filial love which fills our hearts with the spirit of obedience to God.

II. Do we fulfil the law of God willingly, promptly, eagerly, in that spirit of filial love which makes us say, " Abba, Father " ? Let us at least develop the germs of that spirit which are certainly within us ; let us correspond more fully to our vocation as God's children, and invoke the Holy Ghost, in order that we may be sustained by Him in the path of justice, and held fast by that sweetest and strongest of bonds, the bond of love, which, so to speak, does away with the law (Gal. v. 18, 23 ; 1 Tim. i. 9).

COLLOQUY.

The object of this meditation is to excite in us a keen desire to be entirely under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). This was eminently the characteristic of our Blessed Mother. Who can say how efficacious were her prayers, how immense her consolation, how fervent her charity? Let us ask her to offer us to the Spirit of God fully and without reserve. Let us promise to neglect no means of obtaining a fervent devotion to the Holy Ghost; and, finally, let us implore the God of love to pray within us, to enlighten us, to incline our hearts and wills towards all that is truly good.

Veni, Creator.

ARTICLE II. MEDITATIONS FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST AND ITS OCTAVE.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST: THE FIFTIETH DAY AFTER EASTER.

INTRODUCTION.

Origin and Meaning of the Feast.—The solemnity of Pentecost dates from the first ages of the Church. Monsignor Duchesne says: "It is implied rather than explicitly mentioned by ancient writers. . . . The authors and councils of the second half of the fourth century speak of it as a feast already established for a long time." Like the Feast of Easter, of which it is the continuation and completion, it had its figurative celebration under the old dispensation in the Feast of the Harvest and of the First-Fruits.

The Christian Pentecost commemorates the birth

and manifestation of the Church, with the promulgation of the law of charity, which took the place of the law of fear, and which the Holy Ghost came to engrave, not on stone tables, but on the hearts of men.

From this we understand the name of *Solemnity of the Holy Ghost*, as the feast was formerly called, and the honour which is paid to it. Pentecost, like Easter, is celebrated as the greatest of festivals, the solemnity of solemnities.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall take the points of our meditation from the narrative of the descent of the Holy Ghost, as given in the Acts of the Apostles: (1) *The preparatory circumstances;* (2) *the coming of the Holy Ghost;* (3) *the wonderful effects of His coming.*

MEDITATION.

"Vos eritis mihi in regnum sacerdotale et gens sancta"—You shall be to Me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (Exod. xix. 6).

First Prelude.—Let us take the narrative of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The inspired author has described in the first chapter how, after the Ascension of Our Lord, the Apostles and the holy women assembled every day with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the Cenacle, and there persevered in prayer. We come to the Day of Pentecost, the great day on which the Jews showed their gratitude by offering to God the first-fruits of the harvest. About nine o'clock in the morning, when all are united in love and expectation, a noise as of a mighty wind fills the house, and tongues of fire appear over the head of each. All are filled with the Holy Ghost, and begin to praise God in various tongues. The event attracts the multitude. Some are astonished at the miracle, while others attribute to the effects of strong drink the transports of holy enthusiasm of which they are the witnesses. Peter advances towards the crowd, explains what is going on, preaches Jesus Christ, and wins for Him about

three thousand souls. Many wonders and signs are done by the Apostles, and the disciples persevere in faith, communion, prayer, and fervent charity.

Second Prelude.—Let us imagine the house, already sanctified by the first Eucharist, in which the Apostles are assembled with the Mother of God.

Third Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray God on this great day to give us a large share of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

I. The Preparatory Circumstances.

I. *The Date and the Outward Preparation.*—1. (1) On this same day, when the Jews, by God's order, are giving thanks for the fruits of the earth, a spiritual fruitfulness is given to the Church. The wheat of life, which fell into the ground and died, cannot remain alone (St. John xii. 24), but must marvellously multiply under the life-giving influence of the Holy Ghost. To-day are gathered the first-fruits of the spiritual harvest which are destined for the granaries of the Master.

In the contrast between the material ears of corn which the Jews offer to the Lord and the spiritual harvest which is gathered by the Church we see the difference between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. An invisible but supernatural grace takes the place of an outward and visible benediction; pledges of eternal happiness are given in place of temporal promises, Divine fruits instead of the fruits of the earth; and the hearts of men are invited to turn towards Heaven.

(2) Whither do our own aspirations tend? To what end do we direct our most earnest prayers? What effects do we hope for from the faithful performance of our duties? Do all our thoughts, desires, joys, sorrows, exhibit that spirit of the new dispensation which puts away all thought of temporal advantage from the service of God?

2. (1) Fifteen hundred years before, about the same time of year, God, putting an end to the

tyranny of Pharao, had concluded an alliance with the descendants of Abraham. The Hebrews, prepared by the wonderful events of their escape from Egypt to receive the new law, heard from afar with awe the voice of God, who, amid thunder and lightning, charged Moses to give to His people the commandments He had written with His own hand on tables of stone (see Exod. xix., xxxi., xxxii.).

The time is well chosen to replace a visibly promulgated law by a law which grace itself writes in the hearts of men, a law of fear by a law of love, a law of bondage by a law of holy liberty. The wonderful events of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ have disposed the Christian community to pass from the yoke of the Devil to the fatherly rule of the Lord ; and the abyss which separates the two dispensations is shown in the difference of their heralds. On the one hand, Moses, bearing the heavy stone tables of the commandments, comes down from the mountain on which God had manifested His tremendous power ; on the other hand, the Holy Ghost, under the figure of luminous tongues of fire, descends from the kingdom of peace and happiness into the hearts which have already tasted the Holy Eucharist.

(2) What a beautiful harmony in the Divine plan ! How striking is the action of Providence ! How admirable are the ways by which, since the fall of our first parents, men are led to their destined end ! Let us accept this confirmation of our faith, and thank God that we live under the new dispensation.

II. 1. *The Interior Preparation.*—The disciples of Christ are of one mind, persevering in prayer. Such are the proper dispositions for us. To receive a law which confirms our adoption we must use the language of sons addressing their father ; to receive the law of charity, we must live in harmony and peace one with another.

2. On this great Day of Pentecost, are our hearts thus disposed to turn towards God by prayer, and towards men by charity ?

II. The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

I. 1. The members of the little company in whom these things are about to be accomplished are already regenerated by Baptism, and nourished by Holy Communion. They live, but theirs is a latent life, showing little activity without; it is like the sleep of a child. What will be the transforming work of the Holy Ghost?

2. The signs of the descent of this Divine Person symbolize the fullness of life and victory; the rushing mighty wind is the figure of irresistible strength; the tongues of fire represent the light received and communicated by preaching, and at the same time the ardour of Apostolic charity. Light and love and strength are all the necessary conditions of real life; light and love and strength outwardly manifested are all the necessary preparation for victory.

3. Go forth, ye Apostles, spread yourselves over the whole world, civilized or barbarian. You are only twelve in number, your condition is such that men despise you, you have neither weapons nor influence; and yet your light will be sought by wise men, your love will warm hearts that are chilled by a selfish and voluptuous scepticism, your strength will overthrow the standards of Pagan Rome.

II. 1. Let us fix our eyes on this victorious army. How weak and fragile everything seems! Yet in reality all is solid and strong. What powerful reasons for belief we find in this marvellous triumph!

We need have no fear for the destiny of the Church; she has her light and warmth and strength from on high. Let all the world array itself against her; the more it shuns and despises her, the more certainly is it lost in the darkness and cold of death. Unknowingly, it hastens the moment when, lost without the Church, it will throw itself into her arms to find light and warmth and love.

2. Let us earnestly pray on this glorious feast that we may receive an increase of faith and charity and spiritual strength.

III. The Effects of the Coming of the Holy Ghost.

We remark three wonderful effects :

I. 1. *The Complete Transformation of the Apostles.*—Ignorant men, they have the gift of understanding ; doubting and hesitating, they have the faith that works miracles ; timid and fearful, they go boldly forth to preach the Word of God to Jews and Gentiles.

2. If we are called by our profession to Apostolic labours, let us implore the Holy Ghost to give us knowledge and faith and courage for the accomplishment of our mission.

II. 1. *The Efficacy of their Preaching.*—Thousands of souls are led to confess Jesus Christ.

2. A little experience suffices to convince us of the impotence of human words to produce such effects—above all, such lasting effects—in the souls of men. Do we wish for supernatural power to do good ? Then let piety and charity unite us to the Holy Ghost.

III. 1. *The Supernatural Life of the Converts.*—(1) They have one faith and one rule of life. (2) They are of one mind ; their unity is shown forth by their reception of the same bread of life in Holy Communion. (3) They are so detached from the things of their world as to have all things in common.

2. Similar dispositions may be nourished in our hearts by our obedience to grace. How happy would men be if they would allow themselves to be transformed by the Holy Ghost ! And what conquests the Church would make if all her members were like the first Christians ! But while human nature is weak as it is, how can we entertain such a hope ? At least, this ideal of unity and detachment is attainable in religious communities. Let us endeavour to approach this ideal, and live, if we are religious, so as not to endanger by our conduct the complete triumph of the Church.

COLLOQUY.

After having begged for the help of the Apostles and the Blessed Virgin, let us turn to Jesus, and remind Him of His promises. And then let us appeal to the Holy Ghost in the beautiful language of the Church.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus.

MONDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In order to treat fully of the wonderful working of the Holy Ghost in the soul, we should have to speak of sanctifying grace, infused virtues, actual graces, and graces gratuitously given; but as all these have been dealt with in the third part of the "Meditations on the Blessed Virgin," it remains only to consider the *gifts* and the *fruits* of the Holy Ghost. We shall begin with the gifts, and the exercise to-day is intended to give us a better understanding of their meaning. To this end we shall consider them first in their *nature*—that is, in themselves; and, secondly, in their *purpose*—that is, in their relation to the virtues and the Divine operations. The three points of the meditation will reveal them to us as—(1) *adornments of our souls;* (2) *complements of the virtues;* (3) *preparation for the working of the Holy Ghost.*

MEDITATION.

"*Dedit dona hominibus*"—*He gave gifts to men* (Eph. iv. 8).

First Prelude.—Let us think of Our Lord in His cradle, and in this little child whom the prophet Isaias calls a flower out of the root of Jesse, let us recognize the only Son of the Eternal Father, the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may have grace to know the nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and revere them as we ought.

I. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost: Qualities of the Soul.

I. 1. "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." Thus Isaias begins his magnificent description of the figure of Messias. The prophet continues, "the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness; and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. xi. 1-3).

This passage, taken in conjunction with the passage from the Epistle to the Ephesians, which we have chosen as the text of our meditation, and with the tradition of the Church, is the foundation of theological teaching on the subject of the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Church teaches us that the Holy Ghost, dwelling in the just, communicates to them in different degrees seven supernatural gifts, and she leaves to theologians the explanation of these spiritual treasures.

2. Reasoning from these premises, we are led to regard the gifts of the Holy Ghost—

(1) As a participation in the fullness of Christ, a likeness to Him, a communication of His spiritual life. How precious, for this reason alone, should these gifts be to us!

(2) As an effect of the Divine munificence. The gift is a favour, coming from One who owes nothing to one who has no right to demand it.

(3) As an habitual quality of the soul. What is given to us is possessed by us in order that we may enjoy it. Moreover, even the figurative language of the prophet is sufficiently explicit; he speaks of the Spirit as resting upon Christ in each gift that is conferred upon Him.

(4) As an extraordinary quality which calls for our admiration. In ordinary language, we call gifts those exceptional qualities of the senses, the soul, and the heart, which are such that man could never acquire them by the ordinary resources of nature;

and how can we doubt the value of what comes to us from a Divine Giver ?

(5) As a new conformity with God. Does not such a gift reveal its origin by the wonderful effects it produces ? Observe the language of Holy Scripture. It does not speak simply of fortitude, piety, etc., but each time mentions the Spirit. As it said just before, " the Spirit of God shall rest upon Him," so it continues, " the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel," etc. Commentators remark on the use of the singular number. The prophet does not say, " He shall be filled with *the Spirits* of the Lord," but *the Spirit*, to indicate that it is one and the same Spirit which is wisdom, understanding, counsel, etc. In each of these gifts we recognize the Holy Ghost Himself.

3. These, then, are the magnificent aspects in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are revealed to us.

(1) They are habitual dispositions of the soul, supernaturally communicated by the Holy Ghost, who imprints a Divine seal upon man, so that the God of love appears to dwell within him. Is it not in this sense that Simeon, Stephen, and other persons mentioned in Holy Scripture, are described as filled with the Holy Ghost ?

(2) They are the dowry with which the Holy Ghost enriches the soul in order to make it worthy of alliance with the Divine Word. Thus does God deal with us ; He cannot communicate qualities to us without having first created us. When he wishes to love us, He must first make us worthy of love ; when He wishes to take our soul for His bride, it is from Him that she must receive the nuptial robe and all the jewels for her adornment.

(3) It is the greatest honour possible for us to serve as a dwelling-place for the Holy Ghost.

II. 1. We have nothing of our own, but everything we possess is from God. This thought teaches us humility, but it should also make our hearts overflow with gratitude at the sight of all the treasures of grace that God deigns to pour into our hearts.

2. How beautiful is the soul which is rich in

spiritual gifts! What nobility can be compared with that? Oh, how eloquently do all these simple reflections urge us to implore the assistance of the Holy Ghost!

II. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost: Complements of the Virtues.

I. 1. The Spirit of God is strength and life. If His sanctifying influence is fitly symbolized by a rushing mighty wind, His gifts cannot be simply adornments of our souls. According to theologians, they are habitual graces, divinely infused, which dispose the just man to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and so perfect His action within him. A glance at this action will enable us to understand more clearly the purpose of these gifts.

In this supernatural economy, which God has designed for our benefit, we may be called to an *extraordinary* activity, regulated by the workings of the Holy Ghost within us, to which no law applies. We do not speak of that here; it is matter for the third point.

But the ordinary activity of the just man includes acts of two kinds. The first will be found in an honourable life of the purely natural order: the just man speaks the truth, honours his father and mother, respects his superiors, observes justice and equity. Other acts show a supernatural vocation; such are the acts of faith, hope, and charity—acts of the three theological virtues which have no equivalents in the natural order. Such, again, are certain acts of the moral virtues, which are made in accordance with a rule superior to simple reason. Such is the profession of virginity instead of conjugal chastity, mortification instead of simple temperance, the desire for humiliations instead of a lawful moderation in the pursuit of honours.

But the whole life of the just man is placed under the influence of grace (which is the working of the Holy Ghost) and of the infused virtues; and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, by making us ready to follow

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

His guidance, extend their influence to our whole lives.

(1) For acts which are inspired by higher motives the importance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is evident. We must remember that the supernatural virtues do not by themselves give us any special power to act according to their direction. They do not result from our own acts, like natural virtues; and God communicates them to us, in order to enlarge the *capacity* of our faculties in view of our supernatural destiny. With only the supernatural virtues we should, in respect of that higher life which does not follow the inclinations of nature, be in the position of a man who, in the natural order, was endowed with the faculty of acting, but without any good habits. How deeply he would feel the need of dispositions which would make easy what without them would be simply possible! Well, the Holy Ghost gives us all we need, and by the liberality of His gifts facilitates the action of our faculties and virtues, and inclines us to act with a view to our supernatural destiny. We were formerly intent upon earthly things, but the gifts of the Holy Ghost irresistibly impel us to strive after the treasures of immortality.

(2) We now have to consider acts which might belong to natural honesty. The man who is called upon to do them has been for a long time, perhaps, the victim of vice, and the justice which he has recovered has not destroyed his propensity to evil. The gifts of the Holy Ghost, then, come as a valuable help to surmount the obstacle which stands in the way of the good act which the Holy Ghost inspires. But even when the act may be done without difficulty, the man who accomplishes it, provided with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is a man whose heart is set upon the things of Heaven; he has a manner of acting which bears the mark of this sublime disposition. He is truthful, loyal, pious, in quite a different manner from the man who does not believe in Heaven: the gifts of the Holy Ghost enable him to do his ordinary actions in a more perfect manner.

II. While the gifts of the Holy Ghost elevate and ennoble the acts of our daily life, they are to our supernatural life the indispensable complement which renders it *morally* possible. What a precious gift is this, and how devoutly thankful we should be for it! But at the same time we know what we ought to ask for, when temptations assail us more violently, and we feel drawn to sin. What we need is a larger share of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. This is what at such times we must ask of God through Jesus Christ, who sends the Holy Ghost, and through the Mother of Christ, who obtains every grace for us. And this is what true devotion to the Holy Ghost ensures for us in abundance. Let us confess our need, and pray the Holy Ghost to send down upon us His gifts.

III. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost: Preparation of Our Souls for the Divine Operations.

I. If the Holy Ghost helps us in the ordinary use of our faculties, this Divine Guest, a voluntary prisoner of love, reserves to Himself the exercise of a higher power, which will often be known to us only by its magnificent effects. This will be a light which transforms us in a moment; a distaste for earthly things; a relish for heavenly things, which depends neither on our habits nor on the circumstances in which we live; the word that touches a hardened heart; the counsel whose influence, unsuspected, may save a soul—in short, some marvellous effect of the supernatural order. The gifts prevent our resistance to the action of the Holy Ghost; they dispose us habitually to follow His guidance, and to yield ourselves up entirely to this Divine Spirit who breatheth where He will.

II. Let us recognize the sublimity and value of this heavenly guidance, both for our own personal sanctification and for our influence over our neighbour. How quickly we come to the end of our resources for doing good to souls! How many precious interests, public and private, call for help from on high! Let us ask for it, not for the sake of

vain self-satisfaction, but in order to sanctify ourselves, and to be able to do a little more good. Happy is the man who in his apostolic career lives closely united to the Spirit of the Lord!

COLLOQUY.

Mary possessed the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a supereminent degree; Christ had them in all the fullness of their perfection. Let us go to Mary, and through her to Jesus, and pray that the Holy Ghost may come to enrich one soul—our own, whose poverty we know so well.

"*Veni, Pater pauperum.*"

"Come, Thou Father of the poor."

TUESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST—*Continued.*

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—After having considered the place which the gifts of the Holy Ghost occupy in the supernatural economy of our sanctification, we shall endeavour to define the nature of each, while carefully maintaining the distinction between the gifts and supernatural virtues, and not confounding them with the natural virtues of the same name. It often happens that writers misunderstand the full scope of these gifts, attributing to the words the meaning suggested by the Latin equivalents, instead of going back to the original text, and the meaning that the expressions had for the inspired writer; thus have arisen inevitable mistakes and interminable controversies. We shall keep to the meaning assigned to the words by the most learned commentators.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost may be divided into two classes—those which concern our conduct in general, and those which specially concern our relations with God.

The present meditation deals with the first class,

which includes the first four gifts, and will contain four points, treating of *wisdom*, *understanding*, *counsel*, and *fortitude*. In each point we shall consider the nature of the gift and its spiritual value; we shall endeavour to excite in ourselves a reverence for the gift and a desire to possess it, and then offer a fervent prayer for a large share of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

MEDITATION.

"*Nos autem non spiritum hujus mundi accepimus, sed Spiritum qui ex Deo est, ut sciamus quæ a Deo donata sunt nobis*"—*Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us by God* (1 Cor. ii. 12).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the holy joy which leads Mary to break forth into her song of gratitude, the *Magnificat*.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may have a profound reverence for the gifts of the Holy Ghost and an earnest desire to possess them.

I. The Gift of Wisdom.

I. 1. Wisdom is the knowledge of great things and of the great sides of all things. The least of created things, the most insignificant of circumstances, has its purpose in God, in infinite Goodness, and occupies a place in the plan conceived by infinite Wisdom, which knows itself and all its designs. Beside the Wisdom which creates there is a Wisdom which knows.

Beings without reason are incapable of possessing any share of this wisdom. Not only do great objects escape their notice, but their purely sensible knowledge does not enable them to make any reflection beyond their power of elementary perception.

This is not the case of man, who is an intelligent being. Every truth, even the most sublime, finds its

place in his mind, and every object with which he is acquainted has its own language for him. How much they can say to him, telling him simply the impressions, agreeable or otherwise, that they produce on the senses ; showing him how they help or hinder the accomplishment of this or that design ; revealing themselves to him as they exist in the Divine plan, or speaking to him of God and His infinite perfections ! The man who is endowed with vast speculative knowledge, capable of understanding great subjects or of undertaking great designs, is a wise man according to reason ; the man who understands their Divine side is wise according to God. He shares in the wisdom which interprets the works of God's creative power, esteeming things as they are in the sight of God, and discovering the true purpose they are intended to serve. This higher wisdom shows itself and attains its perfection in communicating itself through the medium of language to others.

The gift of wisdom opens our minds to noble ideas ; it is a supernaturally infused faculty of forming them.

2. How can we doubt the great value of such a gift ?

(1) Are not high thoughts the principle of great actions ?

(2) Do we not derive a great pleasure from the possession of wisdom ? Intellectual clearness of vision gives us a higher degree of enjoyment than the beautiful sights which delight our bodily eyes. Of all points of view the noblest is the Divine, and that is how true wisdom gives us a relish for Divine things, which destroys our taste for inferior pleasures. That is the prayer which the Church so often puts into our mouths, *Da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere*—Grant that we may have a *relish* for right things.

Wisdom intones the *Magnificat* of the soul that rejoices in God.

(3) By making known to us the providential purpose of all things, Wisdom leads us to give glory to

God in all our actions, and thus is a continual source of merit.

(4) And in bestowing this great gift on our souls, the Holy Ghost endows us with the capacity to understand the great things that He will communicate to us, and the sublime purposes of all the noble thoughts with which He inspires us.

II. 1. Let us ardently desire an abundant share of this precious gift.

2. Let us endeavour to look upon men, and things, and events, as God views them; let us discard the lower and purely natural views, remembering the words of the Apostle, *Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt Spiritus Dei*—The sensual man—*i.e.*, the man who is guided only by nature—perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. ii. 14), and so let us prepare ourselves to receive this great gift.

II. The Gift of Understanding.

I. 1. *Understanding* is a clearness of mental perception, which enables us to see things as they really are, in spite of appearances. As applied to the only things which interest us spiritually, it implies a quickness to detect the snares laid for us by earthly things, to appreciate the harmonies of the faith, and to discern the innermost impulses of our souls.

The *gift* of understanding is this quality, divinely infused into our souls.

2. Let us see what this precious gift does for us.

(1) It confirms our faith, and makes it easy for us to believe, by putting the proofs of it clearly before our eyes, and enabling us to realize the *merit* of faith.

(2) It prevents us from attaching too great importance to success and failure in the events of our daily life.

(3) It counteracts the seductions of the enemy, and renders easy that supernatural prudence which enables us to see all things as God sees them.

(4) It facilitates the influence of the Holy Ghost by making us prompt in recognizing it, judicious in distinguishing it, and quick to understand the reasons for extraordinary actions and sacrifices. God speaks, and we know His voice.

II. 1. Let us dispose our minds for the reception of this gift by exercising our faith and our confidence in God, remembering that " they that trust in Him shall understand the truth " (Wisd. iii. 9) ; and, lastly, by cultivating that recollection and inward attention which render us sensible of the touch of grace.

III. The Gift of Counsel.

I. 1. *Counsel,* which is the judicious application of general principles to particular cases, regulates the practical decisions at which the mind arrives under the influence of the will. Understood as a supernatural quality, counsel includes the desire of the will to act well. The *gift* of counsel is a facility communicated to the intelligence and the will—to the intelligence that we may understand the motives for doing what is good and perfect, and to the will that we may be sincerely desirous to act well.

2. Without the gift of counsel how many fatal influences seduce us from the path of virtue, or make us hesitate to follow it ! What great need we have of a strong light thrown upon duty and virtue, that our will may be won over by their superior attractions !

If our intelligence is prompt to decide for the right, it will be equally prompt to accept the suggestions of the Holy Ghost. The gift of counsel prepares the way for the action of the Holy Ghost upon us.

II. Let us think how often we find it difficult to follow the path of justice and holiness, and let us implore the Holy Ghost to be our Counsellor—that faithful and inestimably precious Friend who will restrain us from all actions we should afterwards regret, and guide us to right decisions in all things.

IV. The Gift of Fortitude.

I. 1. *Fortitude* in general surmounts all obstacles. In our particular case it surmounts those obstacles which would impede supernatural action: it goes where God wills, braving all danger — even the danger of death.

The *gift* of fortitude is a supernatural courage with which we bear everything and face everything for the cause of God. In the Cenacle, even before the descent of the Holy Ghost, the disciples had the *virtue* of fortitude, though they displayed it but little. But what did they not accomplish when the Holy Ghost had communicated to them in abundance the *gift* of fortitude? This is the source from which comes the heroism of the martyrs.

2. How weak we are, and how formidable seem the obstacles that bar our way to Heaven! We have all the greater need of this strengthening gift of the Holy Ghost.

This gift makes us obedient to the voice of the God of love. Disposed by *Wisdom* to conceive great things, by *Understanding* to recognize the voice of the Spirit of God, by *Counsel* to obey His call, we need one thing more, that nothing shall hinder us in the execution of God's commands. Endowed with *Fortitude*, we can say: "O Holy Spirit, breathe where Thou wilt: we are ready to follow Thee everywhere."

II. Let us pray and strive earnestly that our will may be constant and our passions held in proper subjection.

COLLOQUY.

Let us implore the Holy Ghost to give us all the help we need, and to confer upon us now, at once, in the supernatural order, that capacity to act which we cannot ordinarily acquire without a long struggle. Come, O Holy Ghost—come down into our hearts. They are Thine; direct them as Thou wilt. Mary, dear Mother, obtain for us this grace.

Veni, Creator Spiritus.

WEDNESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST—*Continued.*

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The present exercise will be devoted to a very important subject—the supernatural dispositions which the Holy Ghost puts into our souls with reference to God. In the Hebrew text *Knowledge*, the fifth of the gifts, refers to God, as well as the two last, which are both included in the remarkable expression of the prophet, "He shall be filled with the Spirit of the fear of the Lord," which may be more literally rendered, "The fear of the Lord shall be his breath" (Isa. xi. 3). We shall consider in the three points of the meditation the three last gifts—namely, (1) *Knowledge*, (2) *piety*, (3) *the fear of the Lord.*

MEDITATION.

"Hæc est autem vita æterna, ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum"—Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent (St. John xvii. 3).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves present with Our Lord, when, after His Last Supper, He addresses to His Father the sublime prayer of which these words form part.

Second Prelude.—Let us implore the great grace to live in God, of God, and for God.

I. THE GIFT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

I. 1. The ancients placed the summit of wisdom in the knowledge of oneself. The wisdom which stops there can only be that of the present life. How much better is that knowledge of God to which Our Lord invites us, without which the knowledge of ourselves is necessarily imperfect, and which leads us to eternal life!

This knowledge of God gives us a clear perception of all the Divine perfections, and of the duties which

bind us to His infinite Majesty, and at the same time render us docile and obedient to all the calls of the Holy Ghost. How can he who knows God refuse to obey Him ?

2. But where can this knowledge be obtained ? All creation speaks to us of God, and He has revealed Himself in the dogmas of the faith. Lower cares and pleasures may, it is true, distract our attention and prevent us from hearing, and man, left to himself, finds it difficult to understand the revelation. But the Holy Ghost comes to our aid ; He sees our distress, and disposes us to reason about God, to acquire that practical theology which is within the reach of the simple and unlearned. " I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones " (St. Luke x. 21).

II. Most men close their ears to the testimony of the visible creation, and reject the truths of faith, or relegate them to a corner of their intelligence ; but the Saints, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, arrived at a clear knowledge of God and Divine things. All Nature spoke to them of Him, and they understood fully the words of the Psalmist : " The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge " (Ps. xviii. 2, 3).

Faith instructed them in a marvellous manner concerning the Divine perfections, and the rights of the Lord over His creatures, the manner in which they should behave towards Him, and all that they should expect from Him. These ideas became familiar to them, and they drew largely from the treasury of Divine truth. Faith in God produced knowledge.

Let us follow the example of the Saints, and ask all creation to speak to us of God ; let us take pleasure in making ourselves familiar with the dogmas of faith and the text of Holy Scripture ; and let us often implore the Holy Ghost to give us a fuller knowledge of God.

II. The Gift of Piety.

I. 1. Of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost none should be more attractive than that of piety. It is the glory of the Catholic religion that it calls upon man to look upon God as a father rather than a harsh and unloving master; no sentiment is so powerful as piety towards God in transforming our whole lives; nothing makes duty so easy, or leads us so certainly to happiness, as the affection and generosity of a childlike heart; nothing is so suitable to our condition, for we are the adopted children of God — nothing, in short, gives us the same promptness of obedience to God, for the appeals of such a Father are irresistible. Our Lord and His Apostles insist upon the paternity of God and our duty to treat Him as our Father. "Lord, teach us to pray," said the disciples of Jesus; and He answered: "When you pray, say, Our Father" (St. Luke xi. 1, 2). The spirit which should characterize us is not the spirit of bondage and fear, but the spirit of adoption (Rom. viii. 15).

2. But God is so great, and by His very greatness is so far from us! We are so poor and insignificant that it is very difficult for us to treat Him as our Father. Therefore, the Holy Ghost visits us, and, imprinting His character upon us, engraves deep in our hearts a filial love towards God. "He giveth testimony to our spirit," says St. Paul, "that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16).

II. Let us endeavour to cultivate the virtue of piety which God has implanted within us, and answer the suggestions of the Holy Ghost by seeking to recognize everywhere the fatherly action of God, and behaving as worthy children of such a Father. Let us receive the gifts of God as coming from the hand of a Father, and adore His fatherly will, even in the decrees which seem hard to bear. Let us earnestly pray the Holy Ghost to develop in us the gift of piety.

III. The Gift of Fear.

1. The proper notion of fear does not imply either distress of mind or weakness: it is founded on prudence, when it results from a judgment formed by the mind on the object of fear. There are reasonable fears, there are praiseworthy fears; but there is only one which is holy—the fear of God.

The fear bestowed by the gift of the Holy Ghost is not inconsistent with love—nay, it is part of the filial sentiment. Otherwise understood, fear could not be reckoned in the same category with piety. In fear there is always reverence, and it may sometimes be mixed with distrust. Only that fear which results from distrust is cast out by love; but for the most loving son God remains awe-inspiring Majesty, terrible in His vengeance, while at the same time He is infinite goodness. He inspires confidence, but He permits no presumption. Without this fear, love would grow less, because it would lose its character of reverence.

Temptations to sin, the allurements of pleasure, the impunity of many sins that we know of, and of many others that we suspect, may take away this salutary fear; but the gift of the Holy Ghost keeps it alive in our souls.

2. The great value of this gift is evident. The man who is filled with holy fear cannot sin; he performs with care all that he offers to God, and the reverence he professes for the Majesty of God makes him submit willingly to all the decrees of Infinite Wisdom.

COLLOQUY.

The impressive language of the prophet should suggest appropriate sentiments and prayers. *Christ breathes by the fear of God*—it is His life. Our thoughts and sentiments are purified by the touch of this holy fear, as the blood which flows through our veins, purified by the vital air, gives health and strength to all the organs of our bodies. The preacher said long ago, "Fear God, and keep His command-

ments, for this is all man" (Eccles. xii. 13). Let us earnestly pray God that we may imitate His Son, that we may be sealed by the Holy Ghost with the seal of Divine filiation, and may always act as true sons of the Almighty and All-holy God.

Veni, Creator Spiritus.

THURSDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK: THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The teaching of the Church on the fruits of the Holy Ghost is contained in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of the fifth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The original Greek text and the older Latin versions counted only nine fruits of the Holy Ghost in place of the twelve mentioned in the existing versions of the Latin Scriptures; the number has been increased by differences in translation. We may, however, assume that the Apostle did not intend to draw up a complete list, but only to give certain examples. We shall keep to the number nine, and in this first meditation on the fruits of the Holy Ghost we shall consider—(1) *the nature of these fruits and the importance of knowing them;* (2) *the three first fruits;* and (3) *the connection between them.*

MEDITATION.

"Si Spiritu vivimus, Spiritu et ambulemus"—If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Gal. v. 25).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine Our Lord on the evening before His Passion conversing with His Apostles, and revealing to them the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that we may be of the number of those disciples who, abiding in Jesus Christ, the true vine, bring forth much fruit (St. John xv. 5).

I. The Nature of These Fruits.

I. 1. The Holy Ghost confers an indelible character upon our souls by the seven gifts which have been the subject of our previous meditations. By them we are disposed to obey Him. What is the nature of the impulse He gives us? To what acts does He urge us? That is what remains for us to discover. Considered as done by ourselves, these acts are fruits that we bear: they are the products of a Divine seed, and there is joy in gathering them; but considered with regard to eternal life, they are but the blossom. St. Thomas reminds us that every product of a tree is a fruit in relation to the tree, but we only gather as fruit the final product, which we can taste and enjoy. So our good works are fruits that we bear, but the fruit that we gather and enjoy is the beatitude which those good works merit for us.

2. How useful it is to know the fruits of the Holy Ghost!

(1) Does not the impulse which is given us become irresistible when we know that it emanates from a Divine source? Is it not an honour to do an act to which God Himself urges us? The knowledge of the fruits of the Holy Ghost encourages us, then, in the practice of virtue.

(2) These fruits, enumerated by the inspired Apostle, open to us wide views of true virtue. We shall no longer look upon it as limited by the narrow circle of outward and formal devotion.

(3) If we remark the signs which characterize the action of the Holy Ghost, we are preserved from the snares of the enemy.

(4) The beautiful and ennobling influence of the Holy Ghost gives us greater energy in resisting the vicious suggestions of the flesh.

II. The *Imitation of Jesus Christ* (book iii., chapter liv.) speaks to us eloquently of the different action of nature and grace, and we may observe that these expressive pages are but the development of the passage quoted from the Epistle to the Galatians. The irrefutable authority of St. Paul does away with

all doubt and hesitation. Let us thank God for having given us this teaching in Holy Scripture, and declare ourselves ready to follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

II. The Three First Fruits.

I. 1. Ἀγάπη (*Charity*).—Christians were accused of hating the human race, and yet the first fruit of the Spirit which animates them is love. It could not be otherwise. Love represents the Holy Ghost, who dwells within us; love is a summing-up of all the precepts of the law.

2. To love God, to love one's neighbour, to repeat these acts, to make them as intense as possible, is the first sign of the man who walks in the ways of the Spirit of God.

Let us, therefore, put away all unkind thoughts, all harsh judgments, all that deadens our love to God and man. Let us carefully watch over our thoughts, and resolutely drive away all those that are contrary to charity.

II. 1. Χαρά (*Joy*).—The Apostle inculcates in us here that holy joy which is caused by the glory of God and the sight of good deeds done; it is opposed to envy and jealousy, which St. Paul, in the twenty-first verse, numbers among the works of the flesh.

2. No place must be left for envy, which hardens our hearts. This is the second article of the Divine precept.

III. 1. Εἰρήνη (*Peace*).—What shall we do to maintain peace around us? St. Paul tells us that among the works of the flesh are contentions, emulations, quarrels, dissensions, and that those who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. Discretion and prudence should prevent mutual suspicions amongst us, and thus put a stop to what is an abundant source of discord. Let us do all we can by kind words and gentle behaviour to bring men nearer together, and make peace between enemies.

2. What useful suggestions we have here for self-examination! Our attention is drawn to our sins

of omission and commission, and examination will show us many ways of amending our lives. By our energy in reforming ourselves, by constant efforts to produce a perfect result, we shall, by God's grace, attain to that higher degree of virtue, the fruit of which is reckoned among the Beatitudes. We shall be the peacemakers, who are called the children of God.

III. The Mutual Relation of These Three Fruits.

I. 1. The Apostle, as we have seen, shows us, by using the singular number, that all these fruits are the effects of the same Spirit, and that one perfect disposition brings all the others with it.

2. Let us observe the special connection which unites the three first fruits.

(1) Love is always accompanied by joy. Union with the beloved object gladdens the heart; and in loving we enjoy the feeling of being at peace with God and men. Does not love make us rejoice at the good fortune of others as much as our own? And what peace is more solid and lasting than that which is cemented by love?

(2) Our joy at the happiness of others makes us worthy of love, and makes men love us. "Who can rejoice," says St. Augustine, "without loving the blessing which causes his joy? And how can we enjoy real peace without loving?"

Such joy is opposed to envy, and keeps us from using any such language as would cause estrangement between others.

(3) Peace, in its turn, enables our eyes to see the good qualities which make our neighbour worthy of love, and our hearts to rejoice over them.

II. The consideration of the bond which unites these virtues should not only increase our reverence for each virtue in particular; it helps us to test the one by the other, to examine the sincerity and solidity of each, and gives us means to strengthen ourselves in all.

COLLOQUY.

Let us earnestly pray the Holy Ghost to pour the love of God and men more abundantly into our hearts.

"*Veni, Creator Spiritus,*
Infunde amorem cordibus."

"Come, O Creator, Spirit blest,
And make our hearts o'erflow with love."

FRIDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK: THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST—*Continued.*

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In the three points of this meditation we shall consider, two by two, the remaining six fruits of the Holy Ghost, enumerated by St. Paul—namely, *longanimity, benignity, goodness, faith, mildness,* and *continency.*

MEDITATION.

"*Spiritu ambulate, et desideria carnis non perficietis*"—*Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh* (Gal. v. 16).

First Prelude.—Let us again imagine Our Lord speaking to His Apostles of the Holy Ghost, whom He is about to send them as their great Comforter.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for the grace to produce abundantly the fruits which Our Lord promises to those who abide in Him.

I. LONGANIMITY AND BENIGNITY.

I. 1. Μακροθυμία. — (1) *Longanimity* is the perseverance of holy courage, which is never weary of hoping and acting for the good of one's neighbour. It is in a spiritual sense like having plenty of breath for a long race. It knows how to wait for the right moment to reprove or correct, always keenly desirous to help the conversion or perfection of souls, always ready with a word of encouragement.

(2) The Psalmist tells us, "The Lord is compassionate and merciful; long-suffering, and plenteous

in mercy" (Ps. cii. 8); and St. Paul warns us "not to despise the riches of God's goodness and patience and long-suffering" (Rom. ii. 4). Does not the history of the chosen people of God, as well as our own experience, testify to the patience with which the Lord of all things waits for His creatures to take advantage of His grace, and turn towards Him? This is because God is love.

Our Lord is put before us in the Old Testament as the model of long-suffering. "The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench" (Isa. xlii. 3). He describes Himself under the figure of the father of the prodigal son. This is because He loved men so well that He laid down His life for them.

Among men, the type of longanimity is the mother. There is no heart that loves like hers. Will a mother ever cease to tend a son who is sick, or to pray for one who has gone astray?

Since it is the effect of love, longanimity must be infused into us by the Spirit of love.

2. (1) What a blessing is this virtue to our neighbour and to ourselves! Inopportune rebukes are like oil poured on the fire, while the abandonment of a soul necessarily leaves our previous efforts barren of results, and perhaps we give up at the moment when a last effort might have saved it. So to ourselves longanimity gives much merit and many precious consolations, and encourages us to exercise a very necessary patience with regard to ourselves, our frequent faults, and our ill-kept resolutions.

(2) Let us act, then, in this spirit, especially if we are entrusted with the care of souls. Let us never lose a single one by an impatience which makes us forget what we owe to God, or what we must attempt for the salvation of these souls. Let us think of the patience of Christ, and remember that faults are not committed against us, but against God; and that God wishes to see us patient with others, as He is with us.

II. 1. Χρηστότης. — *Benignity* is an active benevolence, a supernatural pleasure in putting ourselves at the service of our neighbour. In contrast with a

selfishness which refuses to interest itself in the welfare of others, nothing brings men nearer together, nothing makes up for their disappointments, like the practice of that virtue, which is known also by the beautiful name of *humanity*. God has permitted men to be mutually in need of each other, so that they may not live isolated lives, but may be united by mutual service and gratitude.

2. Even if it costs us something, let us be constant in our efforts to do good to others. If some men do not understand us, if our generous intentions sometimes bring us only disappointment, still Jesus Christ watches us, approves our efforts, and will, in His own good time, reward them. Let us, like Him, go about doing good.

II. Goodness and Faith.

I. 1. Ἀγαθωσύνη. — *Goodness* is a perfect probity which satisfies at once strict justice and equity. Is it not strange at first sight to see St. Paul counting among the fruits of the Holy Ghost a virtue so conformable to pure reason? If we think of the temptations suggested by a man's anxiety for his children, if we remember the difficulties of adverse circumstances from which dishonesty alone seems to offer any way of escape, we shall understand that scrupulous honesty is most worthy of our admiration, that there are few men who in their declining years can truly assert they have never failed to observe it, and that this virtue can seldom be found among those who are not rendered superior to earth and its cares by the sanctifying love of God.

This recommendation of honesty is at the same time a profound spiritual lesson.

One might be tempted to try to make up for acts of doubtful honesty by some kind of outward devotion, but the Holy Ghost will accept no such apology. No display of piety can dispense us from the laws of probity, or make amends for an injustice done; it is impossible to please God without being perfectly

honest, and justice ought to be a distinguishing mark of professing Christians.

2. Let us, then, examine ourselves sincerely and seriously, and see whether, for the sake of our own personal interests, or of those of the society to which we belong, we have never compromised with our consciences; whether we have always been faithful to that perfect honesty which saves us from all dread of our last hour, and enables us to enjoy the consolation of peace within ourselves.

II. 1. Πίστις (*Faith*).—We cannot better render the Greek word used by St. Paul than by that good faith which is the perfection of justice. It refuses, on the one hand, to take advantage of the simplicity of others, to set snares for them, to insist on the literal fulfilment of unconscionable bargains; while, on the other hand, it exhibits a simple trustfulness—not the blind trust of a credulous fool, but the reasonable belief of a just judge of men. Such a man will not exaggerate the gravity or the frequency of the faults of others; he would rather suffer an accidental injury than look on everyone with suspicion, or break with the society of his fellow-men because it contains a few unworthy members.

The amenities of civilized life rest on mutual confidence. The man who is always suspicious is as bad as the calumniator of his brethren.

He shows a contempt which wounds the feelings of others, and makes a parade of his worldly wisdom which leads other persons to take pleasure in outwitting him.

III. Let us learn to strike the golden mean between the excessive reserve of the suspicious man and the loquacity of the fool, between universal distrust and an over-rash credulity. It is a great art and a most useful virtue.

III. Mildness and Continency.

I. 1. Πραΰτης, Ἐγκράτεια.—The man who is guided by the Holy Ghost has the command over himself,

over his irascible appetites, by *clemency*, and over his lower appetites by *continence*. This double victory over self is accompanied by a sanctifying effect on others, whether through the irresistible influence of a holy clemency or the admiration which is aroused by the reflection of angelic beauty on the face of the man of perfect chastity. Each of these virtues leads to the enjoyment of perfect peace.

2. What man is there who does not need to acquire more perfect command over himself? Let us take note of our own want of clemency, and the feeble resistance that we offer to the temptations of the flesh, and never rest until we have won a complete victory.

COLLOQUY.

1. Let us reflect how great would be the happiness of a society whose life was regulated by the Holy Ghost. St. Paul teaches us what is true and edifying piety; he preaches the Christian duty of mortification. To practise acts of virtue, and to resist the temptations to the contrary vices—this is what he calls crucifying the flesh like a faithful disciple of Christ (Gal. v. 24).

2. If we have no great influence on the world around us, at least we can exercise it in our families and the society to which we belong. How happy would families and communities be if all their members lived according to the Spirit of the Lord! Let us help to bring about this result by becoming all things to all men.

3. Even in ourselves we should feel a great joy if we lived according to the laws of holy love. Let us walk in the Spirit, in order that we may rejoice in the Spirit.

These reflections will lead us to frame a rule of life for the future, which we will offer to the Holy Ghost, praying Him to be always our guide.

Veni, Creator Spiritus.

SATURDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK : OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE HOLY GHOST.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We have now meditated for fifteen days on the Holy Ghost, His wonderful dealings with man, His gifts and His fruits. Ought not these exercises to leave us a lesson for our whole lives ? What should be the conduct of a man who is marked with the seal of the Holy Ghost ? This important question, which is worthy of our best attention, will be the subject of the present meditation, and we shall see that the Holy Ghost imposes on us a threefold duty—(1) to *enjoy Him ;* (2) to *pray to Him ;* (3) to *glorify Him.*

MEDITATION.

" Glorificate et portate Deum in corpore vestro "—*Glorify and bear God in your body* (1 Cor. vi. 20).

First Prelude.—Let us think of the Blessed Virgin, surrounded by the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray earnestly for the great grace to live as becomes those who bear God within them.

I. THE DUTY OF ENJOYMENT.

1. Enjoyment ! What a fascinating word is this ! Is it possible that the religion of self-denial can make enjoyment a duty ? Yes, because that religion is opposed only to false and dangerous joys, to pleasures which imperil our eternal happiness ; it does not destroy our joy, but replaces it by a better. Yes, because if it is good to give up all other enjoyment for God, it is our duty to accept that which He offers us to taste in Him.

1. Open the New Testament. It urges us to " rejoice in the Lord always " (Phil. iv. 4) ; it promises us a " peace which surpasseth all understanding " (Phil. iv. 7) ; it commands us to " give thanks always for all things " (Eph. v. 20). The Gospel promises

the Holy Ghost as the Paraclete, the great Comforter, and the Church bids us call Him constantly by this name.

2. This joy was felt by the Saints. They enjoyed a consolation which neither sufferings nor tribulations, nor even interior desolation, could take away from them.

3. The Holy Ghost is given to us : He is within us as a friend. Man always enjoys the feeling that he is near one whom he loves.

II. How shall we prepare ourselves to enjoy the Holy Ghost ?

1. By the care we take to know Him. The reverence we owe to God imposes on us the duty of applying ourselves to the study of His favours. We are not required to have a deep knowledge of theology, but there should not be too great a disproportion between our general culture and our religious instruction. God reveals Himself willingly to the humble, but He refuses His choicest graces to those who do not trouble to become acquainted with them.

2. By renouncing inferior pleasures. The flesh, says the Apostle, warreth against the Spirit, and the lusts of the flesh lead us astray, if we give way to them, while self-denial raises our souls to higher joys.

3. By recollection, which gives us a better knowledge of the treasure we possess.

4. By avoiding all sin, and practising virtue. The Holy Ghost is the gift of the just. Let us grow in justice, and we shall enjoy Him more. What a beneficent law is this !

5. By faith, which will assure us of the presence of our Divine Guest, and by confidence in God, which will remove all fear.

II. The Special Duty of Invocation and Prayer.

I. 1. The Apostle tells us that the Holy Ghost inspires prayer, and teaches us how to pray ; if our prayer is to be heard, it must be childlike, fervent,

and sincere ; and the Church addresses to the Holy Ghost under many different forms her appeals of loving confidence. Let us repeat that beautiful hymn, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, in which she addresses the Holy Ghost as " Father of the poor," " best of all consolers," " comfort in toil," " solace in the midst of woe," and concludes with the prayer—

" Heal our wounds, our strength renew,
On our dryness pour Thy dew,
Wash the stains of guilt away ;
Bend the stubborn heart and will,
Melt the frozen, warm the chill,
Guide the steps that go astray.

" Thou, on those who evermore
Thee confess and Thee adore,
In Thy sevenfold gifts descend ;
Give them comfort when they die,
Give them life with Thee on high,
Give them joys which never end."

We seem to forget all that is terrible in God, and concentrate all our attention on His love.

II. Have we hitherto been able to converse with God in this manner ? Let us set to work to learn. Fervent, childlike prayer comforts and strengthens the soul ; but if we would have this strength and consolation, we must banish all bitterness from our hearts, and cultivate a spirit of perfect humility.

III. The Duty of Glorifying the Holy Ghost.

I. 1. A King's son, or the son of a noble family, is brought up from his childhood in a spirit worthy of the glorious traditions of his ancestors ; he is taught to have a proper regard for his name and dignity. The Christian, the just man, should be filled with a similar feeling, but much more intense ; for does he not know that he is of Divine descent, of the family of God Himself, that he bears God in his heart ?

2. This feeling requires him to show reverence for himself, for his own body, by perfect purity, and by chaste and edifying conversation. St. Paul, con-

demning evil—that is, unclean speech—adds the solemn warning, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. iv. 29, 30).

It is the principle of all noble and meritorious conduct. God sanctifies even our bodies, and our hands themselves must glorify Him. The influence of the Holy Ghost should permeate all our actions, as perfumes penetrate the clothes in which they are enfolded.

II. Have we always had a proper regard for holy purity? Let us repent of the unworthiness of our past lives, and ask God to change our hearts. Let us take for our model the Blessed Virgin, whose whole conversation was graced by a simple yet supernatural dignity.

COLLOQUY.

Let the prayer with which we end our meditation be as humble and fervent as we can make it. Let us first ask Mary to lead us to Jesus; then let us remind Our Lord of His promise to send us the Paraclete; and, lastly, let us offer to the Holy Ghost our vows of constant devotion, invoking Him in the words of the Church with profound and loving reverence.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus.

SECOND SECTION

MEDITATIONS FOR VARIOUS MOVEABLE FEASTS

FEAST OF THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH—THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

INTRODUCTION.

ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE FEAST.—1. In the first ages of the Church we do not hear of any special public devotion to St. Joseph—first, because it was necessary to avoid any misapprehension of the teaching of the Church as to the origin of Christ; and, secondly, because public veneration was reserved exclusively for the holy Martyrs. But in the fourth century, and occasionally also in the third, St. Joseph is represented on sarcophagi, generally in the scenes of the Nativity and the flight into Egypt. He carries either the traveller's staff or some tool of the carpenter's trade. In the oldest monuments the features are those of a young man; but later on we find traces of the influence of the Apocryphal Gospels, in which St. Joseph is spoken of as an old man and a widower. In the ninth century his name is found in the martyrologies of the West, while in the East we have verses written in his honour by some hymnographer who bore his name. Before this time, indeed, he was commemorated in the Eastern Church, either with the just men of the Old Testament on the Sunday before Christmas, or with the Blessed Virgin, David, and St. James the Less on the Sunday within the octave.

At the time of the Crusades an Office of St. Joseph was found to be in use in the old monastery of St. Sabbas, near the Dead Sea; and the Franciscans

shortly afterwards adopted the same Office in its entirety, and the Dominicans with some slight modifications. Certain Bishops also introduced it into the liturgy of their dioceses. Thus, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Feast of St. Joseph was kept among the regular and secular clergy alike, though not always on the same day. Two most zealous propagators of the devotion to the holy patriarch were Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly and the pious Chancellor Gerson.

In the sixteenth century a great impulse was given to the devotion of priests and religious by the example of a Dominican Father, Isidore Isolano ; and in the following century the discalced Carmelites, encouraged by St. Teresa, and also the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, came forward as champions of St. Joseph. The devotion of St. Francis of Sales and St. Jane de Chantal is well known.

The Festival of St. Joseph was celebrated in Rome from the time of Sixtus IV. (1471-1484). On May 8, 1621, Gregory XV. transferred it to March 19, and made it obligatory on the whole Church. Benedict XIII., by a decree of December 19, 1729, inserted the name of St. Joseph in the Litanies.

2. The institution of the Feast of St. Joseph was followed by another in honour of his patronage.

At the request of the Spanish King Charles II., Pope Innocent XI. placed under the protection of St. Joseph all the countries subject to the crown of Spain. This decree, which was issued on April 19, 1679, was unfavourably received in Spain, where it was feared that it might interfere with the devotion to the Apostle St. James. In Belgium, on the contrary, the Papal decision was enthusiastically welcomed by both clergy and people.

The decree was subsequently revoked with reference to Spain, and St. Joseph remained patron of Belgium.

3. The Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph was granted to various places by special indult, and on September 10, 1847, Pius IX. extended it to the whole Church. On December 8, 1870, a short time after the Council of the Vatican, the same Pope,

granting the request of the majority of the Bishops who had been assembled for the Council, and desiring to draw down more abundant favours on the Church, which was then the object of so many attacks, proclaimed St. Joseph the patron of the Catholic Church, and raised the feast of March 19 to the rank of a double of the first class. A brief of July 7, 1871, directed the recitation of the *Credo* in the Mass of the feast, the veneration of St. Joseph in the Collect *A Cunctis*, and his commemoration in the suffrages of the Saints.

Plan of the Meditation.—Devotion to St. Joseph has thus become a favourite devotion of Catholics, thanks to the Church, which has encouraged it, and has given so many illustrious examples of it in her supreme Pontiffs; thanks to Providence, who guides the Church, draws the attention of Saints and Doctors to St. Joseph, and disposes the hearts of the faithful to place themselves under his protection.

In this meditation we shall see the motives which have induced the Church to place herself under the protection of the husband of Mary, and the reasons for which God has conferred upon the foster-father of His Son Jesus the supreme honour of patron of the Universal Church.

The three first points of the meditation will be concerned with the motives of the Church, as they are declared by Leo XIII. in his encyclical *Quamquam pluries* of August 5, 1889—namely, (1) *the great difficulties of the present time;* (2) the *mission of St. Joseph to the Holy Family;* (3) the *fitness of devotion to St. Joseph* for all conditions of men. In a fourth point we shall consider the providential reason arising from *the virtues of that great Saint*, and especially *his perfect humility*.

MEDITATION.

"Salus nostra in manu tua est"—Our life is in Thy hand (Gen. xlvii. 25).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the house with the little workshop at Nazareth. St. Joseph is the head of that blessed household,

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to pay to that great Saint such fervent devotion as may be agreeable to the will of God and the intentions of His Church.

I. The Difficulties of the Present Time.

I. 1. When we see how faith is weakened, charity has grown cold, all Christian teaching is eliminated from the education of youth, secret and open war is waged against the Church, the most furious attacks are directed against the Sovereign Pontiff, the very foundations of religion are shaken, and the existence of Christian society is threatened, we may well fear that after the destruction of Christian government the world will soon see the end of the Christian religion.

2. In critical moments like these, what is the attitude of the Supreme Pastor of the Church, the pilot who guides the barque of Peter? It is not one of despair or of idle lamentation. On the contrary, he increases his activity, multiplies his prayers, and so seeks support from Heaven, in order to fight valiantly on earth.

II. 1. What a splendid example is given us here! In those whom God has appointed to rule His Church we find neither weariness nor discouragement. These would be fatal to the interests of the Church, and would be inconsistent with their faith and their hopes, which are founded on the promises of God Himself. Their perseverance is a force which, with the help of God, must lead them on to victory.

2. (1) We, too, have our share in the struggles of the Church and in the controversies in which she is engaged. Do we, who are soldiers in the army, display the same courage as our Commander? Have we the same faith and hope?

(2) Our own hearts are the field of the battle that we have to fight—a battle in which our souls are at stake. How many spiritual enemies we have within us and around us! How many difficulties we have to overcome! Let us remember that we must never allow ourselves to be cast down; that the chances of victory depend on the firmness of our hope.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

II. The Mission of St. Joseph.

I. 1. The Church has two principal patrons—St. Michael and St. Joseph.

St. Michael is given her as patron because of the enemies she has to overcome. The implacable adversaries of the Church, those who are the instigators and leaders of all the attacks upon her, are the rebel Angels whom St. Michael and his legions drove down into Hell. The Church Militant, then, naturally calls upon the victorious captain of the Angelic host to lead her also to victory. But in considering what she herself is, the Church is led to place herself under the patronage of St. Joseph. Divine Providence made that great patriarch the head of the household of Nazareth, the lawful protector of Jesus and Mary. It was the sublime function of his life to surround his virgin spouse and her Divine Child with the greatest love and the most constant care; to provide by his labour for their daily wants; to guard the Infant Jesus from the jealous fury of Herod; to accompany and support the Blessed Virgin and her Child in all their dangers. But the house of Nazareth contained the first members of the Church in Jesus, who is its Founder and its Head, and in Mary, who is the model of all Christians, and the figure of Christian society. The same devoted care which Joseph took of Jesus and Mary during his mortal life he will show from his high place in Heaven for those who are the disciples of Jesus and the children of Mary on earth. Such is the persuasion of the Church, and she believes that in having recourse to the protection of St. Joseph she is only following the guidance of God Himself.

2. It may be asked why Mary should not be proclaimed patron of the Church rather than St. Joseph, and why this title has not been authoritatively conferred upon her. The answer appears very simple. Mary is the true Mother of the Church and of all Christians. Does a child think of choosing for his patron one who is so constituted by nature? No

declaration is necessary for the Church to place herself under the patronage and protection of the Blessed Virgin. It was necessary, on the other hand, that the title should be officially given to St. Joseph, just as God Himself has officially conferred upon him the legal rights of a father over the Child Jesus. The act by which St. Joseph is declared patron of the Universal Church may be compared to the angelic vision in which he received the Divine command: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus" (St. Matt. i. 21).

We see, then, that his title of patron does no wrong to his virgin spouse, but he is placed beside her as the protector of the Church. His legal patronage is associated with the natural patronage of the Mother of God and men, as his legal paternity was associated with the natural maternity of the Blessed Virgin.

II. 1. We, who are followers of Jesus, have the same reasons to place ourselves under the protection of St. Joseph as the Church herself. It might almost be said that we have stronger reasons, for we have the same dangers as the Church without having the same absolute promise of final victory; and, moreover, our inner life more closely resembles the private life of Nazareth than the necessarily public life of Christian society.

2. The mission which St. Joseph fulfilled at Nazareth reveals to us one special character of his intercession. As he was charged with the duty of providing for all the wants of the Holy Family, so does his care for us extend to all our necessities.

3. How shall we show ourselves true clients of St. Joseph? First of all, by a formal act of consecration, we place ourselves sincerely, with all our wants and all our interests, under his protection. The Feast of St. Joseph and that of his patronage will give us opportunities of renewing that act and the other professions of our devotion. It will be easy, without overburdening ourselves, to adopt some practice of piety in honour of St. Joseph during the month of March, and on the Wednesday of each week. Pope Leo XIII. himself composed a prayer to St. Joseph to be used with the Rosary during the

month of October. Would it not be possible to find a place for a short daily invocation—for instance, after the Rosary or the *Angelus;* as in some countries, especially in Italy, the faithful are accustomed to add to the *Angelus* three *Glorias* in honour of the Guardian Angel, or a short invocation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ?

Let us examine our actual practice, and see in what way it may be improved with prudence. Let us offer our good resolutions to the foster-father of Jesus, and ask him to bestow upon us his efficacious protection.

III. The Patronage of St. Joseph Suitable for All Conditions of Life.

I. Whatever be the difference of social condition, the life of St. Joseph has valuable lessons for all.

1. It reveals to the rich and the noble a greatness and dignity which do not depend on wealth or outward show ; for workers, it contains a lesson of industrious labour ; and it teaches the poor to live content with their humble condition.

2. St. Joseph is the model of married persons, of fathers, and of virgins. For the last-named he is, moreover, the protector of their virginity.

3. To priests he teaches—(1) chastity practised for the service of Jesus and Mary ; (2) complete and perpetual devotion to their holy duties ; (3) perfect purity of intention, by which, devoting themselves to the good of others, they are content to live unknown or forgotten.

4. St. Joseph, who was supernaturally enlightened as to his own duty, is the special patron of vocations and of the choice of a state of life. Good Christians enter upon the duties of their condition under his protection, and end their lives invoking his help ; for they all would wish to have a death like his, consoled by the presence of Jesus and Mary.

Bearing in mind the blessings of the life St. Joseph led, the Church in her maternal solicitude

proposes it for the imitation of her children, and gives them as their patron the Saint who has set them such a glorious example.

II. Let us see which of the virtues of St. Joseph offers us an example to follow in our own state of life. Imitation is the homage most agreeable to the Saints, and the practice most beneficial to ourselves.

IV. The Providential Reason for the Exaltation of St. Joseph.

I. 1. The preceding reflections only show us the designs of Providence on the foster-father of Jesus. In giving St. Joseph to the family of Nazareth, God was preparing him for His Church.

2. But there is a special reason why God, so to speak, owed it to Himself to approve the gradual increase of the honour paid to this great Saint. He delights in exalting the humble, and St. Joseph, in the presence of Jesus and Mary, was a model of humility. He effaced himself during his whole life, and willingly accepted an obscure death before the beginning of Our Lord's public ministry, in order that Jesus might be free to fulfil His Divine mission. We may say, indeed, that even after his death he continued to efface himself from the sight of men in the interest of the highest dogmatic truths.

But when once the doctrine of the Church as to the nature of Jesus Christ and the Incarnation of the Word is clearly defined, and all danger of misunderstanding removed, a glory, the continual increase of which is, as it were, foretold by the name of Joseph—"a growing son"—makes amends for this long obscurity, and we seem to see in the exaltation of Joseph, the son of the patriarch Jacob, a figure of the honour paid to the spouse of Mary. What the first Joseph was in the kingdom of Egypt—governor over the whole land, whose word no man might disobey, loaded with honours, and raised to the very steps of the throne—such is the second Joseph in the kingdom of God.

II. Let us congratulate St. Joseph on his exaltation, and not neglect to pay him the honour which for so many reasons is due to him.

It may be that God offers us the common lot of priests and religious, to labour in obscurity for the good of souls. Happy is the man who, putting aside all care for the honours of this world, accepts that holy work, and perseveres in it to the end. Such a life is full of merit, and contains the germ of everlasting glory.

COLLOQUY.

Let us first express our sorrow for having so long neglected to pay to the holy patriarch the honour which is his due; then let us offer to him what we have resolved to do for him, and beg him to be our advocate and intercessor in all our necessities, and especially to watch over our Church and country.

Obtain for us, O Joseph, the grace to lead a blameless life, and may it ever secure thy protection!

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION—FORTIETH DAY AFTER EASTER.

INTRODUCTION.

Origin and Meaning of the Feast.—The Ascension of Christ, that glorious conclusion of the earthly life of the Son of God, that completion of His work of redemption, that announcement of the Holy Ghost whom Our Lord was to send down upon His Apostles, is numbered with Easter and Pentecost among the most ancient of our festivals. Writers and councils of the latter half of the fourth century speak of it as long-established, though no trace of it can be found before the middle of the same century. It is universally observed, like the solemnity of the Passion, and the Feasts of Easter and Pentecost, and in times past few festivals were more popular. We may direct our attention to the glory of Christ or to the coming of the Holy Ghost,

for this festival awakens various feelings—joy at the glorious triumph of our King, and hope that we may one day share that triumph; and while the Apostles could not without sadness see Him leave the earth, the pain of parting was soothed by the expectation of another Comforter.

We may usefully consider the whole story of the Ascension, as it is related in the Gospel, and divide our meditation into three parts—(1) *before the ascension*; (2) *the ascension itself*; (3) *after the ascension.*

MEDITATION.

"*Dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in cœlum*"—*Whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven* (St. Luke xxiv. 51).

First Prelude.—Let us briefly recall the events which will form the subject of our meditation. In the time which followed His resurrection Our Lord gave His Apostles many proofs of the new life which He had resumed on coming forth from the sepulchre, for forty days appearing to them, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God. For the last time He gathered them round Him, and sat at table with them; and during the meal He exhorted them to remain in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high, telling them: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." After this discourse He led them out as far as Bethania, on the Mount of Olives. There, lifting up His hands, He blessed His disciples, and while they looked on He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. While the disciples were standing with their eyes raised to heaven, two Angels clad in white garments addressed them: "Why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven." And the disciples went back

into Jerusalem with great joy, praising and blessing God (St. Luke xxiv. 50-53 ; Acts i. 9-12).

Second Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves on the Mount of Olives among the disciples at the moment when Our Lord gives His last injunctions and prepares to return to His Father.

Third Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for grace to rejoice in the triumph of Christ, and to lead such a life of holiness on earth as will sanctify our exile, and prepare us to meet Our Lord in Heaven.

I. Before the Ascension.

We shall direct our attention, first, to the *persons* who take part in the mystery, and then to their *acts* and their *words.*

I. *The Persons*—1. *Jesus Triumphant and Glorious.*—Without being yet surrounded by His heavenly court, He enjoys the most perfect happiness in His soul ; and His body, released from all suffering, and all fear of the violence of His enemies, has its share in this felicity. But Jesus is not one of those friends whom prosperity makes contemptuous or unmindful of others. In His pure and perfect joy He does not forget those whose burden He has taken upon Himself : He thinks of His Apostles, of His Church, and of ourselves.

Let us thank Him for the constancy of His friendship. Let us be generous in return ; and in this valley of tears let us learn how to take our share in the glory and the happiness of our Redeemer.

2. *The Disciples.*—In spite of all Our Lord's teaching, the disciples could not help thinking of the temporal kingdom they had dreamed of so long. " Lord," they asked, " wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?" (Acts i. 6).

Let us take care that no thought of earthly success, no desire for unworthy objects, shall mar the purity of our religion, or lessen the merit of our acts of virtue.

II. *The Acts.*—Holy Scripture tells us of two special acts :

1. *Convescens.*—Our Lord was at table with His disciples. Let us try to realize the consolation of His sacred presence. This banquet, which probably took place in the Cenacle, prefigures that of eternal life. Let us compare it with the Last Supper, at which Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist. The Last Supper was also a farewell meal, but on that occasion sorrow was the dominant feeling, while here it is hope; there Our Lord and His disciples were met together to celebrate the close of His earthly existence, here they greet the dawning of a life which has no end; there Jesus was sad and preparing for His bitter Passion, here He has done with suffering and announces His entrance into glory; at the Last Supper a traitor intruded into the sacred circle, here true friends are the only guests; there Jesus was arming His disciples for the coming struggle, giving them His body under the species of bread, here He foreshadows the eternal gift of Himself in the beatific vision.

Such meetings took place at intervals during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, and on most occasions Our Lord vanished out of the sight of the faithful, remaining invisible in the midst of them.

Such is the image of the spiritual life. It has hours of consolation not dreamed of by those who cannot give up earthly pleasures. But we must not set our hearts on these consolations: the present is the time of labour, patient, but fruitful; the time of enjoyment has not yet arrived.

2. *Præbuit seipsum vivum in multis argumentis.*—Jesus showed Himself to be alive by many proofs. In this age of scepticism it is well to consider these confirmations of the Faith. Let us remember (1) the witnesses of the appearances of Our Lord—persons of both sexes, differing in character and in the degree of their education, and amongst them doubters, who would believe no evidence but that of their own senses; (2) the number of the appearances; (3) the variety of the circumstances—in the early morning, in broad daylight, and in the evening; (4) the proofs

—Our Lord allows Himself to be seen and touched, He speaks, He eats, He gives food to others, He solves their difficulties and calms their fears. May we not say that God wished to have an answer ready for all objections before they were made?

How strong must be the prejudices of men who could resist this evidence! How weak their argument for unbelief! And yet they are content to risk their salvation by refusing to believe. Let us use aright our reason and our intelligence, and leave to our adversaries their far-fetched sophistries and absurd hypotheses, which lead only to universal scepticism.

III. *The Words.*—1. Our Lord speaks to His disciples of the kingdom of God. The consolations which God gives are profitable to the soul. How well these discourses were suited to the occasion! To disciples who were looking for a temporal kingdom Jesus unfolds a higher future. They are far, no doubt, from understanding all He says to them, but He sows in their hearts the seed which the Holy Spirit will cause to bring forth fruit. It is thus that grace sows in our souls the seed which, through our good will, will bring forth fruit to eternal life.

2. Our Lord tells His disciples not to leave Jerusalem. He wishes them to be prepared by retreat and prayer for the work of their apostolate. What a useful warning is this for those who wish to give themselves to apostolic work!

3. But at the same time He reveals to them their glorious mission. "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." All Christians are entrusted with a like mission. In the Christian society which is their Jerusalem they are called upon to give an example of edification, and they have, besides, to exercise throughout the world the converting influence of virtue. They are in a sense the witnesses of Jesus Christ, witnesses more or less eloquent and persuasive according to the goodness of their actions and the degree of their virtue.

II. The Ascension.

I. *The Persons.*—Jesus is surrounded by His Apostles, His disciples, and we may piously suppose that His Mother also is present. His departure leaves them like exiles upon earth. But the glory into which He is about to enter makes them forget their own desolation. Let us learn to feel here below this spiritual joy, this pure and unselfish happiness, in which we can turn away our thoughts from our own condition to share in the triumph of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints.

II. *The Action.*—1. Our Lord leads His disciples to the Mount of Olives. At the foot of this mountain He had begun His Passion. Let us remember that the meritorious sufferings of the present life lead us to our future glory. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things," said Our Lord, "and so to enter into His glory?" (St. Luke xxiv. 26).

2. Then comes a touching scene of farewell, which we may piously depict to ourselves with all its details. Before Our Lord departs from them the Blessed Virgin and the disciples lavish upon Him the expressions of their love. They beg once more to see those hands, those feet pierced upon the cross, to kiss once more the sacred wounds. Great tears roll down the cheeks of the devoted St. Peter; the delicate features of St. John reveal the emotion which overwhelms him; the Blessed Virgin feels still more deeply, but she is outwardly calm, and sorrow is mixed with joy. Our Lord looks at them tenderly, touched by the affection of those whom He loves so dearly.

3. But see, He lifts His hands towards Heaven, as if to show them whence come the gifts He will shower down upon them. Both hands He upraises, calling down abundant graces upon His disciples, and then He blesses them. O blessing a thousand times more sacred and more efficacious than that of the patriarchs! Let us implore our dear Lord to give us a share in that blessing.

4. And now He rises slowly and majestically to the skies.

(1) Let us follow Him in thought to Heaven. The arrival of the King of Glory is announced, the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem are opened, the Angels and elect come to do homage to their Sovereign, and Christ takes His place for ever at the right hand of His Father. Let us try to realize His happiness and His glory; let us reflect on the immensity of that happiness, the eternity of its duration, the price it has cost, the number of souls delivered from limbo and carried to Heaven as the spoils of victory, the graces which will descend upon the earth.

(2) In this triumph of Christ let us discern the triumph of our own nature. "It seemed we were unworthy," says St. John Chrysostom, "to tread the earth, and now we are raised to Heaven; unworthy to command here, we are exalted to a throne beyond the skies; that human nature to which the Cherubim closed the gates of Paradise is now glorified above the Cherubim themselves."

5. Jesus ascends to Heaven, but the world knows it not; it is too much occupied with earthly vanities. So the Christian soul, purified from every stain, only quits the body to participate in a glorious triumph of which the world can form no idea.

6. A cloud concealed Our Lord from the sight of His Apostles. For them, as for us, begins the reign of pure faith. May ours be a living faith, sustaining us during our exile here, and ensuring us the possession of eternal bliss hereafter.

III. After the Ascension.

Let it suffice to recall the words addressed by the Angels to the disciples who lingered on the mountain. Their language contains a gentle rebuke and a warning: "Why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven" (Acts i. 11). These heavenly messengers

will have no idle contemplation : they urge us on to work which Jesus, when He comes again to judge, will generously reward.

Let us profit by this meditation, and remember the judgment to come, in which every man shall receive according to his works. But these works will be appreciated, not according to their apparent success, but according to the manner in which we have laboured for God. " Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour " (1 Cor. iii. 8).

COLLOQUY.

Let us first express our sorrow at being separated from our dear Saviour, the joy we feel in His happiness, and the hopes which the remembrance of His Ascension raises and confirms in us. Then let us ask the Blessed Virgin to obtain for us from her Divine Son an abundant share of those precious gifts which He deigns to send down from Heaven. So precious did He deem them that they were not too dearly purchased by His departure from the earth. " It is expedient for you that I go " (St. John xvi. 7).

" *Tu dux ad astra, et semita,*
Sis meta nostris cordibus,
Sis lacrimarum gaudium,
Sis dulce vitæ præmium."

" O guide and way to heavenly rest,
Be Thou the aim of every breast ;
Be Thou the comfort of our tears,
And sweet reward above the spheres."

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY—SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INTRODUCTION.

Origin and Meaning of the Feast.—1. The formal and explicit devotion to the Holy Trinity dates from the moment when the first of the disciples of Christ was regenerated in the waters of baptism in

the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. That is to say, this devotion is taught us by Christ Himself, who gave to His Apostles the double mission to teach and to baptize under the express invocation of the Most Holy Trinity.

The Arian heresy elicited a definition of the dogma, and developed the worship of the Most Holy Trinity in the true Church. Every Sunday was thus early consecrated to the memory of this mystery. Moreover, we repeat our homage to the Holy Trinity many times a day. We need only remember the sign of the Cross with which we begin and end all our prayers; the last verse of all our hymns, a poetical ascription of praise to the Three Divine Persons; and the *Gloria Patri*, which concludes every Psalm in the Offices of the Church.

2. The special feast of the Most Holy Trinity is not of very ancient date. Although one Cartuphius, under Charlemagne, seems to have suggested that a day should be set apart to celebrate the most solemn of all mysteries, we cannot find any trace of the feast earlier than the beginning of the tenth century. Stephen, Bishop of Liège, about 920 A.D., ordered its celebration by the Chapter of his Cathedral, and Richard, his successor, extended it to the whole diocese. Thence it spread through Germany and France. Pope Alexander II. (1061-1073), though not forbidding the celebration elsewhere, declined to introduce it into the diocese of Rome. Durand says that in the thirteenth century the feast was kept in almost all churches, and Pope John XXII. (1316-1334) made it of universal obligation.

3. This feast is the crown of all other feasts, and sums up, as it were, all the homage paid to the thrice-holy Trinity throughout the year. It is also meant to make amends for all omissions in the daily worship of the One God in Three Persons.

Two meditations are offered for the feast—one appropriate to the character of the solemnity, as we have just described it; the other more simple and more practical.

FIRST EXERCISE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—In three points we shall consider the Holy Trinity as occupying—(1) the highest place in *dogma ;* (2) the highest place in *religion and worship ;* (3) the highest place in *history.*

MEDITATION.

" Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Omnipotens, qui erat, et qui est, et qui venturus est "—Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come (Apoc. iv. 8).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the dazzling splendour of Heaven, and in the midst of it the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the light of one common Majesty, as perfectly lovely as it is boundless. Heaven echoes with the thanksgivings of all the Angels and the elect.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for the great grace of a firm faith in the august mystery of the Holy Trinity, a confident hope in the promises of God, and an ardent charity in return for all His favours and His love.

I. THE HOLY TRINITY AND DOGMA.

I. 1. As the Triune God dominates over the world He has created, so also He dominates over our faith. The Holy Trinity contains all truth. No mystery is more sublime, none is less comprehensible by us. No created being could have evolved the idea of a plurality of Persons in the unity of one identical nature, and even after the truth has been revealed to us our intelligence fails to grasp it.

2. Let us, in profound respect for the adorable Trinity, formulate as clearly as possible the teaching of the Church on the subject, not in the hope of ever thoroughly understanding a dogma which is beyond our comprehension, but in order to impress deeply on our minds the lessons of our holy religion. We are

taught that there is one nature in God, with a real plurality of Persons. *Three Persons in one God*—that means that Three Divine Persons, really distinct, yet equal, possess not merely a similar nature, in the same sense as all men have a human nature, but absolutely the same nature without difference or distinction ; or, in other words, that those Three Persons are identified with the one Divine nature which subsists in each Person. How, then, are these Three Persons distinguished ? Only by their mutual relations or their origins. The Son is distinct from the Father, because from all eternity the Son is begotten by the Father ; and He differs from the Father only in this respect. The Holy Ghost is distinct from the Father and the Son, because He proceeds from the Father and the Son as from one principle ; and He differs from them in that respect only. These relations, which are not established by any effective causality, constitute the Three Divine Persons. We must put aside entirely all notion of inequality which may be suggested by the words Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son. These relations, whose eternal coexistence is necessary, do not give to the Father, by whom the Son is eternally begotten, any superiority or priority over the Son, nor to the Father and the Son, from whom the Holy Ghost proceeds, any superiority or priority over the Holy Ghost.

3. If we are asked *how* it is possible that Three Persons, distinct among themselves, are not distinct from the same absolute reality, we can only reply by an act of silent adoration ; yet the seeming contradiction is explained by this consideration—that the unity is in the absolute, and the distinction in the relative. It cannot be proved that two things, which are supposed to be equal to the same third thing in their absolute reality, are necessarily equal in their relative reality, and cannot be distinguished from one another by mutual relations.

4. If we are asked *why* there are Three Persons in God, we must answer that the ineffable reason for the existence of each of the Three lies in the perfec-

tion of the Divine essence. As Infinite Wisdom, it requires a Word ; as Infinite Love, it requires a Holy Ghost, although Wisdom and Love are common to the Three Persons, identified in will, as in all perfections.

5. It follows from this that all the visible works of God, the fruits of one will, are common to all Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. But the works of God do not represent to us all Three Persons equally. As we know that the Word has His reason for existence in the Divine Wisdom, and the Holy Ghost in Love, the works which manifest the Wisdom of God represent to us the Word, and those which manifest His Love represent the Holy Ghost ; while we attribute to the Father the works whose greatness we admire, because the idea of Omnipotence is bound up in our minds with the idea of the first principle.

II. 1. In presence of this solemn truth, let us humble our reason, and make an act of faith in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

2. As we must admit the incomprehensibility of the mystery, let us content ourselves with comparisons and parables, like the beautiful legend of St. Augustine and the Angel. It is related that, while the Saint was engaged in his work on the Holy Trinity, he walked one day by the seashore, and saw a little child trying to empty the water of the ocean into a hole in the sand with a shell. When he smiled at the simplicity of the attempt, the child told him that it would be easier to pour all the water of the ocean into that little hole than to explain the least part of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and immediately disappeared.

3. Nothing in the outer world or in our own consciousness would lead us to suspect the existence of Three Persons in God, but since the mystery has been revealed, all nature seems to abound in what theologians call the traces of this primary truth. How many things are associated in our minds with the idea of unity in plurality ! When we think of these things, we turn to contemplate the Blessed Trinity, and multiply our acts of faith, adoration, and thanks-

giving. The Saints have excelled in this practice, and nature, science, and art, have joined in paying homage to the One and Triune God.

II. The Holy Trinity and Worship.

I. 1. Nothing exists but by God ; everything tends to His glory. How much more must all acts of worship be directed to Him ! Properly speaking, there is no devotion to the Saints. The honours we offer to the Saints have God for their object. Every act of worship is a homage paid to the Most Holy Trinity.

2. On this festal day we think of all the works of God—the wonders of the visible world, the greater marvels of the world of grace. They all speak to us of God ; they all call forth this cry of grateful admiration : *Domine, Dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra !*—O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy Name in the whole earth ! (Ps. viii. 2).

And, on the other hand, we collect all the acts of homage which the sight of these wonderful works suggests to us—the homage forced, as it were, from an unwilling intelligence, or gushing from a heart overflowing with gratitude ; the homage of the Saints and the whole Church ; the homage of the Blessed Virgin—and lay them all, like a garland, at the foot of the throne of God, and pray Him to accept them. Let us repeat with Holy Church the words of the *Te Deum :* " To Thee all Angels ; to Thee, the Heavens and all the powers ; to Thee, the Cherubim and Seraphim, continually cry : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. The Heavens and the earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory. Thee, the glorious choir of the Apostles ; Thee, the admirable company of prophets ; Thee, the white-robed army of martyrs, praise. Thee, the Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge."

II. 1. Have we always honoured the Saints according to the spirit of the Church, and in the only manner that can please them ? Has our homage been always

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

directed to God, whom we proclaim glorious in His Saints ?

If we are called upon to teach or to preach to others, have we always made it understood that the *Gloria Patri*, with which all the Psalms are concluded, must also crown all our acts of devotion ?

2. It is good for us to hear in nature the voices that speak to us of God, but it is still better to hear them in ourselves. Let us look into our own souls. We find there high and generous aspirations, sentiments worthy of all praise. Let us remember that all these qualities are found, but in infinitely greater perfection, in God Himself, and that if we give ourselves up to the service of God, He will enrich our poverty with all the riches of His mercy. How much better to choose God for our Master, rather than any creature ! We reach the fountain-head instead of being content with a few drops from the stream ; we enjoy the full light of the sun, instead of the imperfect reflection of a single ray.

III. The Holy Trinity and History.

I. We can understand the flight of time, but we cannot imagine that changeless eternity in which nothing existed but God. But faith tells us that Creation was effected in time, which began with the first creature, and that when time began God already existed, One in Three Persons, in everlasting possession of the infinite bliss which He finds in Himself.

Will God ever cease to create ? We know not. But we do know that long before the first man existed there was an angelic world, composed of spiritual creatures, capable of good and evil, and now for countless ages past reduced to the most perfect order by the eternal reward of some and the eternal punishment of others. The probation of mankind, too, will come to an end. However long men's earthly lives may be, the last day will come, as to-morrow follows to-day. And when that last day comes, what glory will be given to the Holy Trinity ! All the events the world has ever seen—

successes or failures, joys and sorrows—all the sounds it has ever heard—the shouts of gladness or the wailings of grief and pain—all will be past and forgotten, or rather transformed, so as to be presented under one of these aspects—*for God* or *against God*. Whatever has been done for God will receive its reward, and whatever has been done against God its punishment. Let the remembrance of this be with us in all our thoughts and desires, in all our troubles and sorrows. "Afterwards cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, . . . that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28).

II. Insignificant as we are, we can understand this —that our present life will soon come to an end, and that all our thoughts and words and actions are worthless if not directed to the glory of God, who alone is eternal.

This, then, is the task we must set before us—to cast away all useless cares, and keep one end steadily in view, the only one that is worthy of our attention —the glory of God.

COLLOQUY.

1. Let us thank God for His favours and His glory. Let us repeat with the Church the words of the *Gloria* in Holy Mass: "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

2. Let us renew our act of faith in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and ask God to confirm our faith.

3. Let us confess our unworthiness, and implore Mary to present us to her Son; let us remind our Blessed Lord of His words, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (St. John xiv. 6), and ask Him to lead us to His Father. And with this help, let us make a fervent act of charity, declaring that we wish truly to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

Our Father.

SECOND EXERCISE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The object of this Second Exercise is to increase the fervour of our faith, hope, and charity—the three theological virtues by which we honour the Holy Trinity in this life, and attain to the possession of God hereafter. We shall consider the Holy Trinity as the object—(1) *of our faith and worship;* (2) *of our hope and trust;* (3) *of our love.*

MEDITATION.

"Similes ei (Deo) erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est"—We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is (1 St. John iii. 2).

First Prelude.—Let us call to our aid the symbols employed by great artists to represent on their canvas the thrice-holy God, and imagine the Majesty in Heaven adored by the Angels and elect.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray for perfect humility and fervent love, that we may offer a homage which shall be acceptable to God.

I. THE HOLY TRINITY THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH AND WORSHIP.

I. 1. Let us first recall the fundamental idea of the mystery, the absolute unity of the Divine nature, and the Trinity of Persons, equal in all things, all possessing the same Divinity. Let us endeavour to realize how deep and incomprehensible is this mystery. But the deeper the mystery, the greater is the merit of our act of faith. Let us think ourselves happy to be able to offer to the Divine Majesty the homage of our perfect submission, believing though we cannot understand.

2. It is certain that nothing on earth can furnish us with any argument by which we could explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity or any image which could represent it to our minds; but when we have thoroughly grasped this truth, we may follow the

example of the Saints, and endeavour to obtain some partial illustration in a contemplation of some of the phenomena presented by the natural world, and so find a reason for repeated acts of adoration and love.

II. Thus the very obscurity of the mystery is profitable to us. But in the Blessed Trinity all is not darkness. The mystery which we cannot penetrate sheds its own light on our understanding.

The greatest theologians have consecrated their learning and eloquence to this theme, and we, too, may make it the object of our study with useful and edifying results.

1. If we cannot fathom the mystery, we must content ourselves with the reflection that it is necessarily unfathomable, because there is nothing in the created world to explain the possibility of unity in Trinity. The reason is that creation is the reflected image of its Author, and as such God reveals Himself in the unity of His nature, not in the distinctness of His Threefold Personality.

2. Behind its impenetrable veil the mystery allows us to have a glimpse of the realization of an ideal more lofty than those of this world. Even in the things of this world we admire the unity which shines in plurality. Without plurality unity seems to us solitude, while plurality, on the other hand, is inconsistent with absolute perfection, for it cannot be imagined without a partition which diminishes the powers and qualities of the one by all that we attribute to the other. Neither unity nor plurality by itself seems to satisfy the exigencies of absolute perfection. But in the Catholic Trinity we can adore and admire perfect unity without solitude, and plurality without division or diminution. Oh, how incomprehensible are the Divine perfections !

II. The Trinity the Object of Our Hope and Confidence.

I. 1. The God who created us governs the world, but His plans, like Himself, are enveloped in mystery. There are countless things the reason of which passes

our comprehension ; but these difficulties give us an opportunity to show our confidence.

Let us consider the grounds on which it is justified.

(1) Whence come the painful impressions which are caused by the events of our daily life ? From our thirst for justice, from the propensity to good that exists within us. And by whom are these desires implanted in our hearts ? By Him who created us in His own image and likeness. Must we not, then, conclude that everything God does or permits will fully satisfy our noblest instincts, and that the apparent discord will be resolved into perfect harmony ?

(2) Let us consider our position in space and time. What narrow limits confine our vision ! We know but a small part of history ; the very earth we inhabit has revealed to us but half its secrets. How often, even in undertakings conducted by a person of the most brilliant talents, does the want of a perfect knowledge of details lead an observer to form erroneous judgments ! A temporary check assumes the appearance of defeat, though it may be the preliminary of a complete victory. Even the catastrophes of the past, though terrible to people living at the time, like the persecutions of the first centuries of the Christian era, give us cause to bless and glorify the perfections of God.

2. Our conception of the Trinity makes it easier for us to feel this confidence. The Divine perfections are more clearly displayed before our eyes by the fact that we can attribute them to Three Persons acting in concert, and can adore Omnipotence in the Father, Wisdom in the Son, and Love in the Holy Ghost.

Let us, then, offer to God that true confidence which is founded on faith in His infinite perfections, and not on our own finite understanding.

II. But I am destined one day to see and possess this Trinity whom now I adore without comprehending the mystery. The higher it is above me, the more glorious appears my destiny, and the stronger my reasons for hope. Let us give glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

III. The Holy Trinity the Object of Our Love.

I. God, great as He is, gives Himself to us even in this life. Present in all creation by the contact of His Almighty power, He is present in the just as a Friend who allows Himself to be possessed and enjoyed by them. He is possessed through the love for Himself which He puts into our hearts, and the unfathomable mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the essential remoteness of that infinite nature, should give us a better appreciation of that Love which condescends to the level of its creatures.

II. Let us offer to the Blessed Trinity the homage of our praise and adoration, and may gratitude lead us to the purest love!

COLLOQUY.

Let us follow the spirit of the Church, and delight to honour the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, whom we adore every day when we devoutly make the sign of the Cross, or recite the *Gloria Patri*. Let us make reparation for the imperfections of our daily worship, and resolve to perform our acts of piety with greater reverence and fervour. As we have been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, let us live in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let us implore the Father our Creator, the Son our Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier, that we may pass from a lively faith in the Holy Trinity to the splendour of the beatific vision.

Te Deum laudamus.

CORPUS CHRISTI—THURSDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY.

INTRODUCTION.

Origin and Meaning of the Feast.—1. The institution of the solemnity of Corpus Christi was accompanied by circumstances very similar to those

of the Feast of the Sacred Heart four centuries later. In each case Our Lord condescended to stimulate devotion by the spectacle of His love ; in each case He revealed His design to an innocent young girl—a humble, fervent, mortified worshipper of the Blessed Sacrament. Juliana of Liège found in two other holy women, Eva, the recluse of St. Martin, and Isabella of Huy, the same support which, at a later period, Margaret Mary found in her own superiors. A pious young religious, Brother John, composed the first Office of the Blessed Sacrament, under the direction of the blessed Juliana, as a young priest of the Society of Jesus, Father Croiset, wrote the first treatise on Devotion to the Sacred Heart at the instance of blessed Margaret Mary. The Feast of Corpus Christi overthrew the heresy of Béranger and the Sacramentarians ; the Feast of the Sacred Heart was a refutation in advance of the Jansenist heresy. Both feasts were received with indifference and hostility ; both Juliana and Margaret Mary encountered humiliation and opposition ; both purchased their victory by suffering.

2. Blessed Juliana was born at Retinne, near Liège, in 1193, and died in 1258. About 1208 she was living at the hospice of Cornillon at Liège, and one day in prayer she had a vision of the moon with a piece broken from the disc. The same thing was frequently repeated during the next two years, at the end of which time Our Lord explained to her the meaning of the vision. The moon, He said, represented the Church, and the missing fragment the want of a festival in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. It was necessary that the Sacrament of His Body and Blood should be honoured in a more direct and solemn manner than was compatible with the ceremonies of Holy Thursday, and that a special day should be appointed for this purpose, on which there might be an opportunity to make reparation for the neglect and indifference shown by so many Christians to the Holy Eucharist. Juliana was specially charged to take the initiative, and to make known to the world Our Lord's desire for the institution of the

festival. The humble servant of God shrank from the task imposed upon her, and prayed that the mission might be entrusted to someone more capable and more worthy. At last, after twenty years, she told the story of her visions to a venerable Canon of the Church of St. Martin, Jean de Lausanne, who consulted various learned and pious theologians, amongst others the Archdeacon Jean de Troyes, who afterwards became Pope under the title of Urban IV. They unanimously commended Juliana, who was nevertheless not preserved from the humiliations and trials which are the common lot of the followers of Jesus Christ. About 1232 a very beautiful Office of the Blessed Sacrament was composed, of which some fragments only remain to the present day; and it was recited for the first time in 1246 at Fosses, beside the death-bed of the Bishop Robert de Torote, who had just decreed the institution of the feast. It was first celebrated in the following year in the Collegiate Church of St. Martin. Two Cardinal Legates, Hugo de Saint-Cher (1251) and Peter Capocci (1254), joined in promoting the institution in Liège and the territory of their legation.

The year 1264 saw the feast extended to the whole world, an event which had been predicted many years before by St. Mary d'Oignes, as may be seen from her Life, written about 1226. The Office, as finally approved, was composed by the Angelic Doctor, who found inspiration in the eloquent language of the Bull *Transiturus* of Urban IV. The Bull, however, did not obtain its full effect until it had been confirmed by Clement V. at the Council of Vienne (1311), and John XXII. insisted on its observance. A short time afterwards the first processions in honour of the Blessed Sacrament were organized, to which the Feast of Corpus Christi owes so much of its popularity and spiritual influence. We have records of such processions at Sens in 1320, at Tournai in 1323, and at Chartres in 1330.

At the present day the feast is very generally kept in the Oriental churches, and the Office composed by St. Thomas has been translated into Greek by G. Mayr.

3. The object of the feast is to glorify the God of the tabernacle in reparation for the daily acts of irreverence committed against the Sacrament of the Altar, and to develop in the faithful the sentiment of spiritual joy. Such is the spirit of the feast according to the visions of the Blessed Juliana; such we find it in the Bull of institution, in the alleluias of the liturgy, and in the customary ceremonies of the celebration. "Let love," exclaims Urban IV., "bring the faithful in crowds to the churches; let songs of praise express the joy of the clergy and people; let all unite in manifestations of faith and hope and love, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament."

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The meditation must be made in a spirit of joyful gratitude and profound devotion, and, following the lines of the Bull *Transiturus*, we shall consider the Feast of Corpus Christi as (1) *the Feast of Communion*; (2) *the Feast of the Mass*; (3) *the Feast of the Triumphal Presence of Our Lord in His Church*. On this great day the faithful assist at Mass and receive Holy Communion, and Our Lord is carried in procession.

MEDITATION.

"Non relinquam vos orphanos"—I will not leave you orphans (St. John xiv. 18).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine that vast plain in which Our Lord performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. A multitude of five thousand persons, sitting in groups of fifty and a hundred on the grass, taste with delight the miraculous food distributed by Our Lord through His Apostles. After the miracle, He declares that He Himself is the Living Bread that came down from Heaven to give eternal life to those who eat of it.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the spirit of joy and gratitude, that we may receive the Holy Eucharist with greater profit.

I. The Communion of Corpus Christi.

We shall endeavour in this first point to appreciate better the benefit of Holy Communion, and to this end we shall compare the present reality with the figures which preceded it and the eternal happiness which is to follow it.

I. 1. *The Figures.*—(1) The Holy Bible tells us that the first man was placed by God in a garden full of the most beautiful flowers and the most delicious fruits. All these things were created for the benefit of Adam and Eve, who had the fullest enjoyment of them. Yet in the midst of the garden there was one mysterious tree which attracted their attention and their desire, for it promised to whosoever should taste its fruit the knowledge of good and evil. God, on the other hand, asserted His sovereign dominion over them by forbidding them to touch it. "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death" (Gen. ii. 17).

The Garden of Eden is a figure of the Church and the spiritual blessings which are offered in abundance to its children. In the middle of this paradise stands a tree, the most precious of all the trees in the garden. It is the tree of the Cross; it bears, not the fruit of death, but the fruit of life; and instead of being threatened with punishment, we receive a pressing invitation to gather it. "He that eateth this fruit shall have eternal life." Admire the contrast which He has established who comes to restore all things. The taste of one forbidden fruit caused man to be driven out of Paradise, and now we find salvation in another fruit infinitely superior, which the love of God commands us to take and eat. Let us adore the goodness and the wisdom of God.

(2) In the desert in which the Israelites were compelled to wander for forty years until they obtained admission into the promised land, God sent down every day manna for their food. In the eyes of the Christian the present world is the desert in which he has to sojourn and fight till the day when he enters into the promised land of Heaven, and for his

food he receives the bread provided by the all-powerful love of Our Lord; that Bread is Jesus Himself in the Holy Eucharist.

Are we as anxious to nourish our souls with this heavenly food as the Israelites were to gather the manna for the nourishment of their bodies?

2. *The Foretaste of Eternal Happiness.*—The bread of Angels has become the food of wayfarers. In Heaven God is the life of the Angels and the elect, and He who is the food of their hearts and souls comes to us also when we receive the Holy Eucharist; He comes to be the spiritual food of our souls. The banquet to which we are invited is a really Divine banquet, which will continue for all eternity. As the vision of God will succeed to faith in God while charity will remain the same, so the same friends of God who receive Him now in that mystery of faith, the Holy Eucharist, will enjoy Him hereafter in the sight of His glory.

II. The Feast of Corpus Christi reminds us of all the Communions we have made, the consolations we have enjoyed therein, and the fruit we have gathered therefrom; but it should remind us also of the faults and negligences which have made us refuse altogether or accept without proper dispositions the invitations to the Holy Table.

We must therefore to-day—(1) solemnly thank our Lord for having so often condescended to visit us; (2) make amends for our past negligence by increased reverence and fervour; (3) lay down a rule as to the frequency of our Communion, making our preparation and our thanksgiving as perfect as we can; (4) if we are priests and confessors, examine ourselves as to our zeal in promoting frequent Communion with prudence and discretion.

II. The Mass of Corpus Christi.

I. To increase our reverence for the Holy Mass, let us look upon it as holding a middle place between two sacred scenes—the one which was once unfolded on Calvary, the other which is being enacted eternally

in Heaven. The first reminds us of immense sorrow and suffering, but at the same time of infinite love and a sacrifice which brought salvation to the world. The Holy Mass is the mystical renewal of that sacrifice; Jesus Christ is the High Priest and the Victim, and the mystical and unbloody oblation applies to our souls the merits of the bloody sacrifice which was consummated on the Cross.

The scene in Heaven is described to us by St. John in the fifth chapter of the Apocalypse. The Lamb that was slain is exalted on a throne of glory, surrounded by the elect; all creatures adore Him with unceasing hymns of praise. This praise and adoration teach us that from the beginning of the world to the end every prayer, every thanksgiving, every petition for pardon, can only ascend to God and be pleasing to Him through the merits of the Lamb that was sacrificed for us. But before Jesus Christ all religious offerings prefigured that sacrifice which was afterwards consummated on Calvary, and is renewed in every Mass that is celebrated, the Mass being, according to the desire of Our Lord, a perpetual commemoration of Him.

II. How highly we should prize this sacrifice of the Mass, whether as priests we offer it in the name of the Church, or as simple Christians we assist at the celebration! Let us, then, examine ourselves to-day, and see whether we value as we ought the privilege of assisting at Mass, and whether we offer to God, during the Holy Sacrifice, the devotion and confidence that are His due. Let us correct our faults and make a rule for ourselves, determining how frequently and in what manner we shall join by our presence in this offering of infinite value.

III. The Triumphal Presence of Our Lord in His Church.

I. 1. The Gospel describes Our Lord's glorious entry into Jerusalem, the multitude joining with His disciples to do Him honour, some spreading their garments before Him, others tearing down boughs

of trees to strew upon His way, while before and behind rise enthusiastic shouts, " Hosanna to the Son of David ! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord !" (St. Matt. xxi. 9). But the triumph was only for a moment ; it was like a flash of lightning before the dark night of the Passion, and a few days later, in the same city, the people cried out, " Crucify Him ! crucify Him !"

2. The Church possesses in her tabernacles Christ victorious over death and Hell, and our processions are the triumphal passing of the King of Glory. When He is borne under the canopy along our streets, while banners gleam brightly overhead, and the path is strewn with flowers, when every head is bowed and every knee is bent, and our cities re-echo with hymns of adoration, then we can truly say with the Church that God is with us, that He has not left us orphans !

3. Lifting our eyes beyond the things of earth, we catch a glimpse of the infinitely more splendid spectacle of the blessed ones in Heaven offering eternal homage to their Saviour and God. St. John tells us : " These are they who were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and the Lamb " (Apoc. xiv. 4).

II. 1. The Sovereign Pontiff who instituted the festival of Corpus Christi wished to offer to Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist a visible triumph over the heretics, who denied the miracle of His love. Our beautiful processions give glory to our Redeemer, strengthen our faith, rebuke impiety, and make the hearts of the faithful thrill with proud hope and joyous love. Let us, then, do all we can to contribute to the splendour of these processions, in order to testify our love and gratitude. Alas ! in too many countries nowadays Our Lord is not permitted to come forth from the Church. Let Catholics fight valiantly till His enemies are overcome ; let us rally round Him with unfailing devotion, even if rebellious children refuse to acknowledge His dominion.

2. But we must be careful that our conduct is never inconsistent with our professions: we must not acclaim Our Lord in the streets and then crucify Him again in our hearts, for it is in our hearts that He desires to reign.

COLLOQUY.

1. In order that we may more worthily honour the God of the Eucharist, let us offer to Him a resolution which is in keeping with the spirit of this day's festival—to become, month by month, more devout in our attendance at Mass, our Communions, and our visits to the Blessed Sacrament. What an example we have in the Blessed Juliana de Cornillon! With what unspeakable fervour she assisted at the holy sacrifice of the Mass! And when her desire to avoid all singularity prevented her from actual attendance, she would make up for it by greater fervour in private prayer at the time when the holy sacrifice was being offered. We read in the Life written by a contemporary that she went into an ecstasy every time she received Holy Communion, and could not afterwards bear the sight of ordinary food; that after each visit of her Lord she imposed upon herself a week of uninterrupted silence, and for a whole month kept herself free, as much as possible, from all worldly business.

2. Let us, like Urban IV., recognize the incomparable memorial of our redemption left us in this Holy Sacrament, in which our Holy Redeemer Himself is truly present under the species of bread and wine. If this remembrance does not bring to our eyes the tears of joy of which the Pontiff speaks, let us at least offer to the God of our altars by the hands of His blessed Mother the perpetual tribute of sincere and devoted affection.

Pange lingua.

THIRD SECTION

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FIVE SUNDAYS AND THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS

THE VOW OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS TO MARY IMMACULATE.

St. John Berchmans took this vow during the last year of his life. Having signed it with his blood, he offered it at the foot of the tabernacle to the Immaculate Mother of Him whom he adored in the Holy Eucharist.

" I, John Berchmans, a most unworthy member of the Society of Jesus, promise to thee and to thy Son, whom I adore in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, that all my life long, unless the Church shall decide otherwise, I will affirm and defend thy Immaculate Conception.

" In token of which I sign this document with my own blood, and I affix thereto the seal of the Society, containing the Name of Jesus.

" In the year 1620,

" John Berchmans."

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

Three Saints were given to the Church in the sixteenth century to be the models and patrons of youth—St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and St. John Berchmans; and as the Bull of St. John's canonization tells us, it is hard to say which of the three conferred the greatest honour on the Society of Jesus.

St. John Berchmans was born in 1599, the eldest

son of a poor shoemaker at the little town of Diest in Belgium, and entered the Jesuit novitiate at Mechlin in 1616. Shortly after taking his vows he was sent to Rome, where he was a marvel of holiness, even to masters in religious life. Three years later he died, just before the Feast of the Assumption, holding his rule-book and his crucifix in his hands, with his rosary twisted round them.

The vow that he made, and signed with his blood, to proclaim the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin as long as he lived, makes it reasonable that a book written in honour of Mary Immaculate should conclude with a few meditations on the life of the young Belgian Saint, especially as the Sovereign Pontiff has attached indulgences to the devotions of the five Sundays immediately preceding his feast—viz., an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines to each of the first four Sundays, and a plenary indulgence to the complete series.

If we study the life of any Saint, we shall find a resolution, a special devotion, an outward sacrifice of the body, an inward sacrifice of the will, and a special heroism which gives to each Saint his own peculiar distinction. Thus, in the life of St. John Berchmans, we shall find the determination to become a Saint, a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the sacrifice of the body and senses through chastity, the sacrifice of the will through obedience and fidelity to rules, and a heroism which was shown in his desire to do all his ordinary actions in the most perfect manner.

The Catholics of Belgium recently offered to build a church in Rome dedicated to St. John Berchmans, as a memorial of the jubilee of the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and an affirmation of their belief in the close connection between this high prerogative of the Blessed Virgin and the holiness of the youth who made a solemn vow to defend it. This holiness is a glory of Mary Immaculate, and should attract us to imitate the devotion which produced such a splendid result.

The facts of the young Saint's life, and the quota-

tions from his sayings, are taken from the biography written by Fr. Cepari, S.J., and from the *Spicilegium* of Fr. Van der Speeten, S.J.

FIRST SUNDAY: THE DESIRE TO BECOME A SAINT.

SUBJECT OF THE MEDITATION.—Let us never forget the blessed day when we felt the loving embrace of God drawing us away from the tempest of earthly affairs, and heard His voice within our souls, exciting in us the most sublime of all desires—that of sanctity.

The Psalmist tells us that the man whose will is in the law of the Lord is like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season (Ps. i. 3). The stream of God's grace has been poured down upon us, and we have had the power to grow and bring forth fruit in like manner.

We have had the *power*, but have we had the *will?*

What has become of all our holy aspirations after virtue and perfection, our generous purposes, our resolutions of zeal and self-sacrifice? If we go on as we are going, where shall we end? Shall we die regretting that our fervour and enthusiasm have given way to lukewarmness and indifference?

May our holy patron preserve us from such a melancholy fate! Let us learn from him the *desire* to become Saints.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall see in the three points of this meditation that St. John Berchmans brought to the work of his sanctification a *determined* will, an *enlightened* will, and a *generous* will.

MEDITATION.

"*If I do not sanctify myself during my youth, I shall never attain to sanctity*" (saying of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine the young Saint at the moment when, radiant with joy, he entered the

Jesuit novitiate at Mechlin. His biographer, Father Cepari, tells us that for a whole hour he continued to weep tears of joy at the thought that he was enlisted in the service of God.

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly pray that through the intercession of St. John Berchmans we may have the will to become Saints; and let us do our utmost to understand the nature and the necessity of this determination.

I. A Determined Will.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—1. Holiness appeared to St. John Berchmans like a treasure which it was possible, and even easy, to acquire in the religious life. Hungering and thirsting after justice, he saw spread before him a table loaded with the spiritual food which alone could satisfy his desire. He never approached his spiritual director from the time of his entrance into the Society without promising to become a Saint. "With all the means offered to me," he used to exclaim, "how can I fail to reach the highest holiness?"

2. The conviction that it was in his power filled him with a determination to attain it. No one ever desired success in an undertaking or victory in battle as ardently as he desired holiness. He was like the merchant seeking good pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had and bought it. And that pearl was the reign of God in his soul.

3. This desire was no vague longing; it produced in his mind the fixed idea of holiness, and in his will a firm determination to acquire it. "I am determined to become a Saint," he would say, "and that soon." He promised to become a Saint, he renewed this promise to his confessor, and everyone who heard it knew that he would keep his word.

II. *Application.*—1. The ardent desire for holiness is an excellent preparation for attaining it. Let us think of the words of Our Lord: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall

have their fill" (St. Matt. v. 6). Then let us ask ourselves seriously whether our desire for holiness can be compared to a hunger and thirst which is sure to be satisfied. Let us compare our desire for holiness with so many other hopes, futile and worthless maybe, which engage our attention.

Let us, like St. John Berchmans, reflect on the abundant means of sanctification that are offered us, whatever our state of life may be. We might well be surprised at the slowness of our progress in spite of the help that is given us.

2. But to the desire must be united a *determined will*. Even in the affairs of the world, the proverb tells us, where there is a will there is a way. But there must be a real will. No half-formed wish, no fleeting fancy, can make up for the want of a fixed determination of heart and will.

How worthy is this exalted aim of all the energy we can display! And how certain the result! How many men love and seek for things that they will never possess! How many love gold, and yet die poor! And all the time God calls out to us: "Love Me, and you shall possess Me. You cannot love Me without possessing Me."

II. An Enlightened Will.

I. *Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans, in the pursuit of holiness, took care to guard himself against a threefold illusion.

1. *The Illusion of Delay.*—He did not put off his great projects to the distant future, or even till the morrow. When he was asked when he intended to become a Saint, he invariably answered: "*Now.* Now; for if I am to die like a Saint, I must live like one. Now; for if I do not sanctify myself in my youth, years will not bring me sanctity."

2. *The Illusion of Consolations.*—He did not look for consolation in prayer, nor those inward feelings of satisfaction which so many persons regard as the necessary accompaniment of their fervour, the touchstone of their progress. He even prayed God not to

lead him into any extraordinary ways in which his devotion might degenerate into self-seeking. He cared for one prayer only—that which should make him better.

3. *The Illusion of Great Occasions.*—Not keeping himself back for extraordinary occasions, he knew how to employ his energy to the best advantage in the thousand little affairs of every day. *Communia non communiter.* His favourite motto was : " Make a great deal of the very least things."

II. *Application.*—1. Happy are we if, like our holy patron, we can protect ourselves against the fatal temptation to put off our sanctification till a more convenient season, which never comes ! Grace is offered to us now, here, where we stand, at this moment. Now is the time to accept and follow it.

2. How often are some people unnecessarily discouraged by spiritual dryness in prayer ! They reproach themselves with having sought God less than sensible favours. Let us take care not to be too anxious about our own feelings and our own satisfaction ; let us go straight to God.

3. Let us not wait for special opportunities to distinguish ourselves. Every detail of our daily life, every little thing that happens to us, affords a test of our faith and hope, and gives an occasion for an act of love, or some good action which shall lead us to God. Instead of complaining of the persons and things that surround us, instead of simply resigning ourselves, let us at every moment and in every incident recognize the presence of God, who at that moment and by that incident seeks to draw us to Himself.

III. A Generous Will.

I. *Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans permitted no tie which should restrict the liberty of a will wholly given to God, no special affection, no sensible or natural friendship, no human respect. Kind and obliging to all, his conduct was in all respects governed by the rule of the Society, and no

request of any person whatever could ever induce him to transgress it in the slightest degree.

II. *Application.*—Human respect is a frequent cause of hindrance to our spiritual progress. God permits friends and relations to throw obstacles in our way to perfection. He who is infinitely above all things wills that we should glorify Him by renouncing everything that keeps us from Him. In the world human respect is the cause of grievous offences; in the religious life it makes men sacrifice the Rule by which they are bound and the perfection at which they aim. Let us be perfectly assured of this—that we can never approach perfection until we are perfectly free, and have no other ambition but to love Jesus Christ and to follow Him in all things.

COLLOQUY.

Let us conclude this meditation with a determination to become Saints, and ask the Blessed Virgin and St. John Berchmans to offer this holy resolution to God.

Ave Maria.

SECOND SUNDAY: DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

SUBJECT OF THE MEDITATION.—Nothing helps the soul on its way to God like those holy affections by which it is attached to a person or a mystery in which some Divine perfection is specially manifested. They increase our confidence, multiplying our acts of virtue, and ensuring for us powerful intercessions in Heaven.

By these characteristics we recognize solid devotions, and distinguish them from those foolish and eccentric—one might almost say superstitious—practices which are generally suggested by some worldly motive.

In order that they may exercise a sanctifying influence on our souls, our devotions must be *pure*—that

is to say, supernatural in their motives; *genuine*—that is, corresponding to our mental convictions and the inclination of our will; and *practical*, in order to give us vigour and enthusiasm. Consequently, they must be well chosen, and not too numerous.

How many Saints have found in devotion to the Mother of God the strongest support of their piety! That is because no created being has been so closely united with God as the Blessed Virgin in whom the Holy Ghost accomplished the miracle of the Incarnation of God the Son, because no other being has so powerfully and so sweetly reflected the perfections of God's infinite Majesty. Like St. Stanislaus and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. John Berchmans was a favoured child of Mary. Happy we if by studying his example we can cultivate a piety like his.

Plan of the Meditation.—We shall see that the devotion which St. John Berchmans vowed to the Queen of Heaven was a *pure*, *genuine*, and *practical* devotion.

MEDITATION.

"*If I love Mary, I am sure of my salvation, and of my perseverance in the religious state, and I shall obtain from God whatever I ask*" (saying of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine St. John Berchmans either as a young scholar joyfully consecrating himself to the service of Mary in the sodality of the College at Mechlin, or as clothed with the religious habit, signing with his blood his vow to defend the Immaculate Conception.

Second Prelude.—Let us implore, and at the same time try to deserve, like St. John Berchmans, the inestimable grace of real and tender devotion to her who is both Mother of God and our Mother.

I. Pure Devotion.

I. *Example of the Saint.*—The devotion of St. John Berchmans was entirely supernatural in its motives. The object of all his prayers and supplications was

that he might speedily attain to holiness. He asked for prayers and Masses at Montaigu, and at the Blessed Virgin's altar in the Church of St. Peter at Louvain, but all with the same intention—that he might know his vocation, that he might be allowed to enter the Society of Jesus, that his vows might be accepted, and he might derive spiritual profit from his journey to Rome. Through the little Rosary that he recited every day—the crown of twelve stars, as he called it—he hoped to obtain the principal virtues of which he felt he had need. It was only in the second place that he asked the Blessed Virgin's help in those less important things which Our Lord promised should be added unto those who seek first the kingdom of God.

II. *Application.*—1. Have we a serious end in view in our devotions? Too often our intention remains vague and indefinite. The want of a lively faith and of some definite object must deaden our piety. If we have a fixed goal in view, we press onward till we reach it; if our devotion is a mere matter of routine or idle pastime, we do but loiter on the way.

2. In our novenas and our prayers for the intercession of this or that Saint, do we not often forget the warning of Our Lord, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice"? How many pious persons complain that they never obtain what they ask for! But what does that mean to them? It means that they fail to succeed in some pecuniary affair, some undertaking imprudently begun and unskilfully conducted; that they are not cured of some illness, a wholesome trial which makes them think of Heaven; that they do not at the first attempt see the Angels coming down from Heaven to do their bidding; and while they fret over their want of success, their impatience and worldliness make them neglect the indispensable conditions of prayer.

II. Genuine Devotion.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—1. The devotion of St. John Berchmans was *genuine*, first, because it was

rooted in a firm faith. (1) He had such an exalted idea of the perfections and prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin that he was never weary of inventing new titles for her. (2) He attributed to her the blessing of his religious vocation, and shared with so many other Saints the conviction that she who gave us Jesus, the Author of all grace, is equally chosen to transmit to us all the graces that flow down from the throne of God. (3) Devotion to Mary was, in his opinion, the surest way to obtain all he wanted from God. Let us recall his words, quoted at the head of this chapter. "Mary," he cried again, "to thee I commend my holiness, my health, and my studies."

2. The genuineness of this devotion was shown by its *duration*. St. John Berchmans loved Mary always. His fervour knew no relaxation nor intermission. As we see him at the beginning of his career, such he continued to the end. He pressed affectionately with his dying hands the same little rosary he had carried with him on his barefoot pilgrimage to Montaigu. Even in his agony he declared that devotion to the Blessed Virgin had been his principal means of perfection, and he exhorted all around him to have a great love for their Mother in Heaven.

II. *Application.*—1. The firm assurance of St. John Berchmans may be ours also. Do we strive to acquire it?

2. Are we constant in the fervour of our devotion to Mary? Intervals of slackness mar the enthusiasm, the unity, and the beauty of our homage.

3. Let us imagine what a consolation it will be to us at the hour of death if our daily rosary has been recited with reverence and attention.

III. Practical Devotion.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans was wholly devoted to Mary. If called upon to prove his affection, he might have pointed to the fervour of his daily offering, his study of the prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin, the notes he took for meditation while

waiting the opportunity to write in her praise, his pious earnestness in speaking of Mary in recreation and in his visits to the sick, his promise to write a book in her honour, his oath to defend on all occasions the dogma of her Immaculate Conception, and his zeal which even the exhaustion of sickness could not diminish. Father Cepari sums up all in one word : " St. John Berchmans seemed to be born for the purpose of glorifying Mary."

II. *Application.*—1. What life is there in our devotions ? Of what good are they, if they are performed with little attention, and if they have no influence on our conduct ? Can we expect any good result from them ? Perhaps they are, as it were, put away in a corner of our minds and forgotten, while they ought to fill up our whole lives, to satisfy our craving for affection, and preserve us from the deadly chill of selfishness, and from an inordinate love of creatures.

2. We must not think that St. John Berchmans had this fervour and this devotion born within him. They were the fruit of a resolution faithfully kept, and if we aspire to a fervour like his, we must kindle it within us by prayer and practice.

COLLOQUY.

Let us, like St. John Berchmans, offer our good resolutions to the Blessed Virgin, and implore her to be our counsellor and guide.

Ave Maria.

THIRD SUNDAY : THE SACRIFICE OF OUR BODY AND SENSES THROUGH CHASTITY.

SUBJECT OF THE MEDITATION.—How beautiful is the virtue of chastity, as we contemplate it in its perfection in the Saints ! It seems austere at first, for it demands the holocaust of the body and the senses, but in exchange for this sacrifice it imprints

upon the features of those who practise it a charm of heavenly beauty. They seem hardly to belong to the earth ; they seem to be created only to gaze upon the face of God in Heaven.

How important it is to realize the transforming influence of chastity in addition to its essential merit ! The practice of it produces such a reverence for the virtue as to lead naturally to a vow, and that vow, fully understood, enriches the soul with a thousand spiritual blessings.

Besides its effect upon ourselves, we must consider also its influence on those around us. Perfect purity was always the antidote to the corruption of the age, but nowadays, in presence of the shameless attacks upon the sanctity of marriage and the first principles of morality, a jealous care to raise ourselves above the mire of sensuality by the loftiness and holiness of all our desires is a reparation that we should willingly offer to the most pure Heart of our dear Saviour.

St. John Berchmans was one of those virgin souls which the Church holds up to the admiration of the world and the delight of her heavenly Spouse.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—We shall admire in St. John Berchmans that chastity which—(1) *sacrifices the sensual appetites ;* (2) is accompanied by *spiritual beauty ;* and (3) *raises the soul to God.*

MEDITATION.

" If thou wilt be a child of Mary and of the Society of Jesus, be jealous of thy chastity " (saying of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us picture to ourselves St. John Berchmans in the midst of his brethren, smiling and happy, adorned with that modest grace which invites to chastity.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask, through the intercession of our holy patron and the Queen of Virgins, that we may have a great love of chastity, and may offer our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord.

I. The Sacrifice of the Senses.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—The writings of St. John Berchmans, his resolutions, and all the actions of his life, testify to a love of chastity, whose scrupulous delicacy was only equalled by its generosity.

He sacrificed to this virtue all pleasures of sense, all gratification of the body.

He guarded his eyes with incessant vigilance, and practised the severest mortification of his body, never allowing himself any relaxation of his austerity. At table he refrained from all indulgence, and was absolutely indifferent to the food that he ate. Not only did he avoid all excessive familiarity, but any unnecessary contact with another person seemed to him a shock to his modesty. He desired that his imagination should be the purest reflection of his thoughts, and he gave up even some useful reading, lest he should meet with something that might offend his virginal soul.

Besides this continual watch over the senses, continual hard work kept him free from the dangers that come from idleness. Such was his love of chastity, such the reverence he professed for his body, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

II. *Application.*—1. A vocation like that of St. John Berchmans calls upon us to honour the Lord of our flesh by a perfect purity. Does our life bear witness to our true love of chastity? Do we not seem sometimes to forget how beautiful and how precious it is? We relax our vigilance, we are careless, and take imprudent liberties; we neglect the precautions which were taught us at the beginning of our priestly or religious life; we give way to feelings in which we try to persuade ourselves there is no harm, though we know there is danger. Does not all this give us cause for regret for the past, and for stricter watch over ourselves in the future?

How many persons there are who make a profession of piety, and who admire the voluntary chastity of the privileged children of the Blessed Virgin! But if they yield to the desire to see and hear every-

thing, if they are too self-indulgent, and cannot avoid little excesses in food and drink, can they say they are doing all that is required in order to obtain this inestimable blessing ?

No doubt we must face dangers fearlessly, but they must be the dangers which God permits us to incur in order to test our humility or to give us an opportunity of glorious victory, not those to which we expose ourselves by our own curiosity or self-indulgence. Let us have a delicate regard for chastity, and be always on our guard against attack ; let our courage be superior to the desires of the senses ; let us offer our good intentions at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, and often she will inspire us with a natural inclination to all that is pure, and in any case we shall have the happy assurance that we can never be defeated in the battle.

2. It is not, indeed, a simple question of perfection, but it is wisdom and prudence. Long ago St. Augustine mourned over the fall of men who had seemed as steadfast as a Jerome or an Ambrose. Let us profit by this teaching, as St. John Berchmans did, for daily experience should convince us of our extreme frailty, and we know that our subtle enemy is always preparing fresh snares for us.

Oh, if in spite of our imperfections we have been preserved from serious offences against this virtue, let us be grateful for the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and try more and more to deserve it by constant temperance, by mortification, by an exact observance of all our rules, and by a careful watch over our senses.

II. The Beauty of Chastity.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—This virtue of St. John Berchmans gave him a special charm for all who knew him. His biographers tell us that his fellow-students would come to gaze upon his beautiful and holy face, and go away the better for the sight. They speak of his remarkable and attractive modesty, the consolation given by his visits to the sick, who

anxiously awaited them ; the pleasure his society gave to all, whether priests, scholastics, or lay-brothers. A universal favourite was the gentle *Giovannino*.

If men were delighted with his outward conversation, the Angels themselves must have loved to contemplate the spotless beauty of his innocent soul, into which no impure thought was ever allowed to enter. His will, governed by reason, kept all his senses in complete satisfaction, and thus free from the yoke of bondage. He found no difficulty in accomplishing the work he had resolved to do, and to the beauty of order and victory over self he united the beauty of that liberty which is the characteristic of the children of God.

Application.—Let us be sure of this—that we please Our Lord best if we offer Him a pure heart for His habitation, and thereby also we clothe our souls with a beauty which will endure for ever. Is any sacrifice too great in order to secure this inestimable blessing ?

III. The Purpose of Chastity.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—The chastity of St. John Berchmans, humble and sincere, kept him in close union with his Saviour. His imagination, his intelligence, his heart, were filled with thoughts of God. His days were passed in sweet intercourse with Jesus Christ. His conversation was in Heaven. He seemed to belong no more to the earth, all his desires being fixed on that celestial country to which he was so soon to take his flight.

Application.—St. Paul tells us that this is the object and the consummation of perfect chastity. If he praises and recommends virginity, it is because of the help it gives us to draw nearer to God, and to love Him alone.

Why should we not give this crowning perfection to our virtue of chastity ? How unreasonable is it, after having broken the strongest natural ties, and renounced the most legitimate affections, to allow ourselves to be enslaved by our attachment to less

worthy objects! Let us cheerfully give up self-love, ambition, worldly success, earthly riches, unprofitable friendships, in order to be free to draw nearer to God, to belong wholly to Him, and have no thought but for His service.

St. Paul reminds us that "he that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God; . . . and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 32, 34).

COLLOQUY.

Let us earnestly implore the help of the Blessed Virgin and the angelic John Berchmans, with a firm resolution to avoid all voluntary imprudence that may imperil our chastity, and let us boldly face the dangers and conflicts which come upon us from no fault of our own, being assured that with the assistance of our heavenly patrons we shall win a complete and final victory.

Ave Maria.

FOURTH SUNDAY: THE SACRIFICE OF THE WILL

SUBJECT OF THE MEDITATION.—St. Paul tells us that, being free from sin, we are made servants of justice (Rom. vi. 18). Servitude seems a strange result of freedom, and yet it is a necessary result, for there are two opposite influences contending for the mastery in each of us—the concupiscence of the spirit and the concupiscence of the flesh (Gal. v. 17).

The one cannot be victorious unless the other be overcome. But this servitude of the one, consequent on the victory of the other, means real freedom and dominion, for submission to God ensures the triumph of the better part within us. "O God," says the Church, "to serve Thee is to reign."

It is easy to conclude that this complete liberty

and this signal victory cannot be won without entire submission to the laws of justice, and that perfect humility to which Our Lord promises the first place in Heaven.

Humility is nothing but the submission of the human will to the will of God. It is shown in various ways according to the different conditions of human life. Two meditations, therefore, are proposed, the first of which is specially adapted for religious.

FIRST EXERCISE—FOR RELIGIOUS.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—St. John Berchmans ardently desired to offer to God a complete sacrifice of Himself, and his sacrifice consisted in a scrupulous fidelity to all the rules of his religious profession. We shall consider—(1) *the perfection*; (2) *the spirit and reasons*; and (3) the *merit and the fruits of this fidelity.*

MEDITATION.

"I would rather be torn to pieces than deliberately disobey one rule or one order of my Superiors" (saying of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us imagine St. John Berchmans offering to God the sacrifice of his free will. "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty and all my will" (exercises of St. Ignatius).

Second Prelude.—Let us earnestly ask of Almighty God, through the intercession of St. John Berchmans, the grace of that absolute submission which contains the complete sacrifice of ourselves to God.

I. THE PERFECTION OF THIS FIDELITY.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—1. We shall understand the completeness of the young Saint's faithfulness to rule if we consider—

(1) *Its Universality.*—Every single rule, every expression of the will of his Superiors, whatever might be the subject to which it related, was implicitly obeyed.

(2) *Its Rigour,* which permitted no dispensation.

(3) *Its Constancy.*—A short time before his death St. John declared that he could not remember any deliberate disregard of the slightest rule during the five years of his religious life.

(4) *Its Principle.*—This fidelity was not accidental, nor was it the result of a series of good resolutions; it was the fruit of one solemn determination, expressed in the emphatic words we have quoted above: "I would rather be torn to pieces than deliberately disobey one rule or one order of my Superiors."

2. It is difficult for us to realize such exact and perfect obedience, and yet nothing could be more conclusively proved, for it is attested by those who were the daily witnesses of the young Saint's actions. During his lifetime more than a hundred of his religious brethren were asked by himself or his Superiors to observe his behaviour, and not one of them, in spite of the most attentive vigilance, ever found him guilty of the slightest infringement of rule.

II. *Application.*—1. The simple recital of this perfect obedience shows us the grandeur and nobility of the young Saint's character, and compels our admiration. Good resolutions must be faithfully kept, for if we are content with a defective observance we can never attain to perfection.

2. Let us remember how, before we entered the religious life, the observance of rules seemed to us the natural consequence of the state we were about to choose of our own free will; and how often have we since made perfect fidelity to rules the object of our promises to God and men!

Let us compare our actions with our promises and resolutions. What a contrast there is between them! How deeply we have to mourn over our inconstancy and weakness!

II. The Spirit and Reasons of this Fidelity.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans was so exact in his observance of rules—

1. Because he aspired to sanctity. He knew that

this consisted in complete fulfilment of the will of God, which he sought to discover in the minutest detail, which faith showed him in the smallest rule, the lightest word of his Superiors. Their orders, coming from an authority commanding in the Name of God Himself, were as sacred to him as if he heard a voice from Heaven, saying: "This is what God requires of thee."

2. Because he was so much attached to his vocation, and had so much at heart the interests of the Order to which he belonged, and the welfare of its members; and he saw that upon a faithful observance of rules depended the general well-being of the community, their mutual edification, their growth in holiness, their perfect union in act and aspiration, and, consequently, the happiness of all.

3. Because faithfulness to rules appeared to him a form of the service of God necessary for sanctity, and at the same time possibly for all, in every state, in every place, and on every occasion.

II. *Application.*—These sublime reasons have lost none of their force, and the proud spirit of the age should make us all the more anxious to console the Heart of Jesus by a perfect humility. Let us, then, learn to set a high value on that scrupulous observance of rules which worldly persons would consider trivial and unimportant.

III. The Merit and Fruit of this Fidelity.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—1. All other things being equal, the *merit* of our actions is measured by their motives and the free exertion they demand of our will. How great, then, must have been the supernatural value of that perfect obedience which was inspired by faith and charity, and which required of our young Saint the entire sacrifice of his own will, the renunciation of worldly motives, and the courage to persevere without ever turning aside?

2. To judge of the *fruits* of his constancy, it will suffice to recall the touching scene of the Saint's bidding farewell to his brethren a short time before

his death. Reverently addressing his Superior, he said : " If your Reverence thinks fit, tell them that my greatest consolation at this moment is that I cannot reproach myself with any deliberate venial sin, or any voluntary transgression of rule or order since I entered the Society."

II. *Application.*—1. May we not attribute all our failures to imperfections which are the opposite of those qualities which we have so much admired in St. John Berchmans ? Must we not blame our love of independence, the revolt of our will, which, having voluntarily accepted the yoke, only half consents to bear it, or our slavish fear of the opinion of the world, the surest sign of want of character ? Let us blush for our weakness and inconsistency.

2. How blessed is this perfect fidelity, which can give us such consolation in the hour of death ! What satisfaction can independence give us to be compared with this ? Let us have done with frivolous excuses, and hold ourselves bound in honour to a loyal and generous fulfilment of our promises.

COLLOQUY.

Without a scrupulous observance of rule we cannot attain to sanctity. On the other hand, this scrupulous observance is a certain means of attaining it ; our desire for sanctity is the motive of our religious life.

Ought not these simple considerations to remove all our hesitation, and confirm us in our resolution of perfect obedience ?

It is said of St. John Berchmans, in the collect of his beatification, that God has made his wonderful holiness to consist in the perfect observance of religious discipline. Nothing will please him more than to see us resolved, as he was, never to offend deliberately against any rule whatever. Let us, then, daily place ourselves under his protection, and ask his intercession, that we may imitate his perfect fidelity.

Ave Maria.

SECOND EXERCISE.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—St. Augustine tells us that in the control of our inferior appetites by reason, and the submission of our reason to the Son of God, consists the perfection of order and the perfection of peace. This is the characteristic of the peacemakers, in whom there is no resistance to the will of God ; this constitutes their special resemblance to Him, and gives them the right to be called His children. " Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God " (St. Matt. v. 9).

This perfection of order and peace is the fruit of a sacrifice of the will, of which St. John Berchmans gives us such a conspicuous example.

In the three points of this meditation we shall consider the triple harmony of—(1) *peace with God* ; (2) *peace with our neighbour* ; and (3) *peace with ourselves.*

MEDITATION.

" I will direct all my efforts to preserve peace of soul and interior joy " (saying of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us think of St. John Berchmans, whose features reflected the peace within him, the result of those constant efforts of which he speaks in the words quoted above.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray for the grace to know and value that peace which we can obtain only by perfect surrender of our will to God.

I. PEACE WITH GOD.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans had a great reverence for the majesty of God, and a loving confidence in His infinite goodness ; he submitted cheerfully to every manifestation of God's will without a murmur or regret.

How often he spoke of the necessity of complete

surrender of self to Providence! "Take care to honour God, and God will take care of thee. . . . Without thought for the future, I wish to commit myself to Him, to trust Him for everything. . . . Have for God the feelings of a son for his mother."

II. *Application.*—1. Is it difficult for us to realize all the rights that God has over us? Let us think what they are, and we shall see how unreasonable are our complaints, our impatience, our rebellion against His will. How generous God has been towards us, and how ungrateful we have been for His favours!

2. Let us remember the words of Our Lord, which show us the loving care of God for the least of His creatures, and exhort us to cast all our care upon Him; let us always remember our Father who is in Heaven, and cultivate a spirit of humility and childlike confidence; then, like St. John Berchmans, we shall find in Him our strength and our stay.

II. Peace with Our Neighbour.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—The principle of his relations with his neighbour was contempt of self and reverence for others—interior reverence, which kept him from rash judgments; and exterior reverence, which led him to treat everyone with courtesy and consideration. He was always thoughtful for others, always careful not to be troublesome to anyone, all this was the natural result of that forgetfulness of self which he called the short road to perfection and the source of a great peace.

II. *Application.*—1. This rule of conduct is in striking contrast to that of the world, in which every man is actuated by the selfish desire to make use of others, and get all he can out of his neighbour. Let us see where this principle leads us. In the world it is the seed of hatred and dissension; to those who act upon it it brings trouble, mortification, and bitter disappointment.

2. What does our holy religion require of us? It

calls upon us " not to judge before the time " (1 Cor. iv. 5); to " love one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another " (Rom. xii. 10); to " let nothing be done through contention, neither by vainglory; but in humility let each esteem others better than themselves " (Phil. ii. 3).

The application of these principles would change this world into a Paradise. We cannot make the world adopt them, it is true, but by taking them for our own rule of conduct we can ensure for ourselves true happiness and inward peace.

III. Peace with Ourselves.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans gives us an admirable example of a life of regularity and order, within and without. Calm without being apathetic, he was perfect master of himself; his passions were in perfect subordination to his will. He was equally regular in his outward actions; nothing was left to chance, either in the actions themselves or in the manner in which they were performed, but everything was done with a care and precision which could not fail to produce the desired effect.

II. *Application.*—1. Let us compare the order and regularity of the Saint's life with the want of method in our own. If we laid down a simple rule for ourselves, leaving nothing to chance, we should avoid many of the mistakes we habitually commit, and increase the merit and usefulness of our lives; and the offering of the little sacrifices of every day would ascend like incense to the throne of God.

2. But for this we need energy and determination. We need not follow the rule of St. John Berchmans in all its details, but if we desire to imitate his constancy we must have a rule of our own, and let nothing discourage or distract us from faithfully observing it. Practice will strengthen our will, and we shall soon obtain that complete control over ourselves which will enable us to make progress in every virtue.

COLLOQUY.

Let us ask the intercession of St. John Berchmans, that we may enjoy the blessing of an ordered and regular life, in which every action is done for the glory of God.

Ave Maria.

FIFTH SUNDAY: DAILY HEROISM.

SUBJECT OF THE MEDITATION.—We are tempted to reserve our energy for extraordinary occasions, and to forget that perfection consists in doing our ordinary actions well in the circumstances in which God has placed us. Here is our battle-field, here the enemy awaits us, here are the weapons with which we must repel his attacks. If God should ever call us to higher duties and responsibilities, we shall only succeed through the strength we have acquired by the habit of performing our ordinary actions well.

St. John Berchmans was taught by grace to seek for holiness in the paths that are open to all men of good-will. His daily heroism is a most useful subject for meditation, appropriate to all conditions, and the three aspects under which it will be presented are suitable equally for religious and secular persons.

MEDITATION.

"*Make a great deal of the very least things*" (saying of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us think of St. John Berchmans under the likeness which has pleased us best among the various portraits of the Saint.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that we may every day make progress in the way of holiness.

I. THE HEROISM OF COMMON LIFE.

1. *The Example of the Saint.*—Like all men, St. John Berchmans had his likes and dislikes, but his piety and fervour had given him an experience of

spiritual things far greater than is possessed by most novices in the religious life. Full of intelligence and initiative, he could not help forming his own ideas on the subject of his studies, and his own projects for the exercise of his zeal and activity. Do we not do the same every day of our lives ?

But on entering the novitiate, St. John Berchmans found added to the law of God and the law of the Church a code of minute rules fixing some duty for every moment of his day. How often his devotions were disturbed by having to converse with the other people in the house, while his heart yearned for solitude ! How often his zeal was made to suffer by having to take relaxation at a time when he would much rather have worked ! How many prayers he had to interrupt, and Communions to sacrifice ! These crosses were multiplied as the study of secular subjects was added to that of religious perfection, and a multitude of things required his attention. But in this he found the first opportunity for his daily heroism. His own words were : " My greatest mortification will be the community life." These words reveal his struggles and sacrifices, but also his firm determination to take the yoke upon him, to submit to a rule of life not of his own making, and to obey it in the most perfect manner. Thus, little by little, forgetting his own inclinations, he bent his will to ready compliance with orders, and performed all his duties, not simply with resignation, but with cheerful alacrity.

We know that his fidelity never failed, and that, when sometimes in his last illness he ardently desired to receive Holy Communion, he would not allow the brother infirmarian to ask for it, because it would be against established custom.

II. *Application.*—1. Community life is of obligation for all religious. It is enjoined by the Council of Trent, and occupies the special attention of the Holy See, and it is the object aimed at by most reforms.

It consists essentially in submission to a rule and a Superior, and in the acceptance of a mode of life

in which certain common exercises are prescribed, and all matters connected with residence, food, clothing, and the like are left to the care and discretion of the Superior.

A member of a religious Order must forget his own likes and dislikes, and faithfully fulfil all the duties imposed upon him. He must forget his own health, and be content with the common fare, except for weighty reasons left to the judgment of his Superior. He must forget his previous condition and his present relations, so as not to make them the cause of any relaxation of the rule. He must forget his age and his services, and not make them a ground for dispensation. He must aim at perfection, and look upon a faithful observance of his rule as the minimum required for its attainment.

There is less danger in an exception which adds to the severity of the rule, and entails a greater strictness of life. It is less likely to be desired from motives of self-love, and there is little fear of its being too frequently asked for. The only exception St. John Berchmans ever desired for himself was that once a month he might be allowed to pass a day in complete retirement, without taking part in the common recreation.

It is easy to see that community life is a life of self-abnegation, and that by reason of the sacrifices it entails it is the surest way to attain true sanctity.

2. Without being under religious obedience, most of us find that the circumstances of our life, our residence, our occupations, our daily routine, are to a great extent arranged for us without any choice of our own. These conditions of our life, if properly accepted, are means of sanctification. They teach us resignation and unselfishness, and offer abundant opportunities for the exercise of Christian heroism. Let us be of the number of those who cheerfully accept the little trials of life, and, without giving offence to anyone, walk steadily along the straight path of virtue.

II. The Heroism of Daily Relations.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—In his family, in the service of a master, at college, in the religious life, at Diest, in Flanders, at Rome, St. John Berchmans was brought into contact with men of various characters and dispositions. He once at least in the course of his studies came across a fellow-student who took a delight in teasing him, but by his supernatural gentleness he overcame opposition, and won the hearts of all. He was on friendly terms with everyone, and all who knew him found an irresistible charm in his conversation. He exercised a salutary influence over all, and died regretted by all who knew him.

II. *Application.*—Once more, what heroism may be concealed under a placid exterior! We must deny ourselves in order to become all things to all men, to be kind and affable and charitable to all, to show the same respect to all our Superiors, and the same good-will to all our equals and inferiors.

This heroism is within the reach of us all. There is no position in life in which we cannot, by our generosity and sympathy and kindly behaviour, live for others, and thus live for God.

III. The Heroism of Daily Life.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—The heroism of St. John Berchmans was most fully manifested in the perfection with which he performed all the ordinary duties of his daily life. Let us think of the multiplicity of his obligations, his many prayers, his studies, his work, and remember that the same care was bestowed on all. All his prayers to God, all his intercourse with his fellow-men, all his actions and thoughts, were characterized by the same striving after perfection. We shrink from the difficulties of such a task, and give way to apathy and indifference. But it was not so with St. John Berchmans, whose motto was *Communia non communiter*—to do the very least things in the most perfect manner. He

aimed at perfection, and he attained it. Is not this an example for us to admire and to follow ?

II. *Application.*—Let us remember that every action of our lives contains in it the seed of spiritual profit, of virtue, and of eternal happiness, and we shall see how much we have lost by our indifference. We may not reach the degree of sanctity attained by St. John Berchmans, but it will be an immense advantage to us if we endeavour to do our ordinary duties as perfectly as possible. Even our failures will have the advantage of teaching us humility, and why should they discourage us ? Every step in advance is taken irrevocably, and our good resolutions will enable us to make progress along that path of virtue and merit in which no trouble is thrown away, and even our mistakes have their usefulness. If our failures make us less satisfied with ourselves, let us console ourselves with the thought that we are more pleasing to God, and give greater joy to the Angels and Saints.

COLLOQUY.

Let us rejoice in the happiness of St. John Berchmans, and earnestly ask his intercession that we may imitate his heroism on earth and share his reward in Heaven.

Ave Maria.

FEAST OF ST. JOHN BERCHMANS : AUGUST 13.

PLAN OF THE MEDITATION.—The death of the Saints is their birth to the true life. What for the wicked is the end of all things to the Saints is but the beginning. For this reason, the most appropriate subject for their festivals is the contemplation of their happy death.

The man who retains the possession of his faculties to the last will naturally cast a glance on *his past*, *his present*, and *his future*. The consideration of these three things, and the sentiments it aroused in the breast of St. John Berchmans, will form the subject of this meditation.

MEDITATION.

" These three things are my most cherished possessions. With them, I am content to die " (words of St. John Berchmans).

First Prelude.—Let us think of the young Saint in his last illness. His pallid face reflects the heavenly joy within him, while his wasted hands lovingly clasp his crucifix, his rosary, and his little book of rules.

Second Prelude.—Let us pray that, by the intercession of St. John Berchmans, we may so live all the days of our lives that our last end may be like his.

I. A Glance at the Past.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—St. John Berchmans can look back on the whole course of his life with a tranquil mind—his childhood, his boyhood, and his youth ; the time passed in the world, and the time passed in religion ; the labour of his early years, and the career which he embraced later on under the impulse of grace and the free choice of his heart ; his years of novitiate, and the time passed since his religious profession. He finds no error to repair, no fault to regret, nothing left undone through idleness or neglect. He looks back on a pure, well-filled life of industry and innocence, and who can describe the consolation he feels in the restrospect ?

II. *Application.*—Should we feel the same peace and contentment in St. John Berchmans' place ? Would not the countless faults committed since the dawn of reason, the many precious hours wasted in idleness, be to us a source of unavailing regret ?

Let us be wiser in the future, and hasten by the fervour of our lives to redeem the time lost. Let us so act that we may have nothing to reproach ourselves with during the remaining time, be it long or short, that God leaves us in order to complete our sanctification.

II. A Glance at the Present.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—In this last solemn hour St. John Berchmans has only one love in his heart—the love of his Saviour and his God, for it is in God that he has loved his relations, his friends, and his brethren, to whom he has always shown such a tender and helpful affection. During the last year of his life he was constantly occupied with the contemplation of Divine love. That love will never grow cold, but will endure through all eternity. "Charity never falleth away" (1 Cor. xiii. 8). This was the consolation of the young Saint in his last moments—that he would soon be eternally united with Him who was the object of his undying love.

II. *Application.*—What a fruitful source of regrets and disquietude, and perhaps also of remorse, will it be to us if at the hour of death we discover in our hearts some unworthy or disorderly affection! What consolation can we possibly find in an attachment which tarnishes the purity of our souls, and disturbs the peace of our last moments? Each day may be our last. Let us have no place in our hearts for any but those holy affections which are immortal, because the Eternal God is their source and their end. After all, are not these the only ones free from the reproach of selfishness or vanity?

III. A Glance at the Future.

I. *The Example of the Saint.*—But how shall we picture to ourselves the glorious prospect that unfolded itself before the dying Saint? Oh, happy dawn of heavenly day! Oh, light that knows no fading! He feels the first thrill of that joy which shall last for all eternity. He breathes his last sigh, and his soul is carried straight to the feet of God. *Intra in gaudium Domini tui*—Enter into the joy of thy Lord. He hears the gracious invitation, and takes his place at the banquet which Our Lord prepares for those servants whom at His coming He will

find watching. "He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them" (St. Luke xii. 37).

II. *Application.*—The same happy lot is offered to us, and in the near future; for the time of probation passes like a flash of lightning, and the time of our eternal reward draws near. The same happy lot will be ours if we have, like St. John Berchmans, a real, earnest, unswerving determination to attain perfect sanctity.

COLLOQUY.

Let us gather up the lessons which the life of this young Saint teaches us. Is it, after all, so very difficult to follow in his footsteps? For those of us who are under the vow of religious obedience, is there not less left to do than what we have already done? Let us finish the work we have begun. We have turned our backs upon the world; let no lingering desire for anything earthly hinder us on our way to Heaven. Let us make up our minds to become Saints, and offer our resolution by the hands of St. John Berchmans to Mary Immaculate, and through her to Jesus, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

ALPHABETICAL INDEX

N.B.—The figures refer to the pages ; ii. *denotes the second volume.*

I. MEDITATIONS ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Affability, ii. 200
Affections, 403, 421 ; spiritual, 12, 13 ; and charity, ii. 151
Affinity with God, ii. 12, 13
Angels : and Mary, 105 ; of Bethlehem, 362 ; office of, ii. 87, 88 ; Mary exalted above, ii. 279
Angelus, 39
Anger, ii. 212
Anna the prophetess, 381
Annunciation, 39
Apocalypse and Mary, ii. 261, 273
Apostles confirmed in grace, ii. 77
Apparitions, 34
Assumption, 115 ; Gospel for the, 123 ; proof of, ii. 232 ; honour of, 235

Birthdays of Saints, 135

Canticle of Canticles and Mary, ii. 288
Career, choice of, ii. 15
Ceremonies, 102 ; of the Church, ii. 190
Charity : sanctifying feasts, 415 ; excellence of, ii. 151, 158, 162 ; identified with Holy Ghost, 152 ; touchstone of, ii. 154 ; and the other virtues, ii. 166-170
Church, the : beauty of, ii. 262 ; born on Calvary, ii. 249 ; tried and persecuted, ii. 264 ; in prayer, ii. 188 ; Mary a type of, ii. 258, 261, 266
Circumcision, 3, 5, 6
Clerks Regular of the Mother of God, 129
Command over ourselves, 427
Confraternities : Our Lady of Mercy, 147 ; Seven Dolours, 44 ; Our Lady of Victories, 130 ; Mount Carmel, 97 ; The Holy Rosary, 158 ; The Sacred Heart, 68
Constancy, 180
Co-redemptress, 8, 381, 428-432
Corruption of the body, ii. 222-224
Counsel, 51 ; the gift of, 54, ii. 52

Death : of Mary, 118, ii. 57, 224 ; of Jesus, ii. 57, 223 ; acceptance of, ii. 58 ; and corruption, 223
Desolation, ii. 138-142, 220
Devil, the, Mary's victory over, ii. 238
Direction, 107, 399
Discernment of spirits, 315-318
Discouragement, 123, 133, 138, 212

Dissipation, 360
Dogma, evolution of, 188
Dolours, Feast of Seven, 43, 153

Edification, 435
Egypt: flight into, 389; sojourn in, 392; return from, 396
Election, ii. 5-8
Elizabeth, St., 92, 323
Enthusiasm, 323
Envy, 232, ii. 281
Eucharist, prefigured by the Crib, 357
Exile of our present life, 393
Expectation of Mary, 261

Faith: its humility, ii. 102-107; liberty, ii. 96; practice, ii. 119-123; reward, ii. 114-119; trials, ii. 110-113; use, ii. 106; way to find, 99-102; Mary's, 327, ii. 96-123
Family: Feast of Holy, 17; the Christian, 21; the, without God, 20
Fear, gift of the Holy Ghost, ii. 51
Festivals: attendance at, 416 antiquity of, of Mary, 115
Fortitude: gift of the Holy Ghost, ii. 52; value of, ii. 207-211

Generosity, 28
Gesù, 80
Gifts of the Holy Ghost, ii. 51, 52; in Mary, ii. 53; in ourselves, ii. 53; preternatural, ii. 55
Glory: of Heaven, ii. 228-231; vanity of earthly, 311
God: requires co-operation of man, 319, 347, 351; His supreme rights over us, 421
Gospel, Mary in the, 417, ii. 272
Graces: actual, ii. 65-69; Divine, 74-78; origin of, 336; given to the humble, ii. 177; obedience to, 226, 397; fullness of, in Mary, 225; gratuitously given, ii. 60; in Mary, ii. 63; in us, ii. 65; Sacramental, ii. 71; in Mary, ii. 73; sanctifying, ii. 30; value of, ii. 47; of Jesus Christ, ii. 38; in Mary, ii. 35; and the Divine maternity, ii. 45-49
Gratitude to God, 334

Happiness: of the humble, ii. 179; united with suffering, ii. 219
Heart of Mary, 129
Heaven: happiness of, ii. 27; for Mary and for us, ii. 144-149; envy unknown in, ii. 281
Heresy, Mary victorious over, ii. 240, 276
Herod, 389
History, glorious, of Mary, ii. 274-278
Holy Ghost: expectation of, 437; gifts of, ii. 51; and Mary, ii. 289
Hope, ii. 123-130; how acquired, ii. 131; trials of, ii. 132-137; fruits of, ii. 144-149; of Mary, ii. 126, 130, 134; Mary, our, ii. 260
Humility, 311, ii. 171-180
Hyperdulia, ii. 13, 46

Immaculate Conception: the dogma, figures, 202; history, 188; in relation to faith, 37; to purity, 35; the festival, 188; its origin, 195; meditations, 200-252
Impeccability of Jesus Christ, ii. 73; of Mary, ii. 77
Impurity, ii. 227, 236
Incorruptibility: of the body of Mary, ii. 224-227; of our own bodies, ii. 227
Infallibility, Papal, 192

Intention, 183
Ireland and the Immaculate Conception, 196

Jealousy, 232, ii. 281
Jesuits, 79
Jesus Christ : and the Church, 15 ; and Mary, 399, 417, ii. 286 ; theandric action of, ii. 254 ; sanctifying grace of, ii. 34 ; impeccability of, ii. 78 ; meditation of, ii. 254 ; in Heaven, 87 ; model of filial piety, 403 ; death of, ii. 223 ; presentation of, 27, 367 ; first-born of God, ii. 19 ; of Mary, 348 ; purity of, ii. 217 ; redemption of, ii. 246, 248, 254 ; finding in the temple, 404-412 ; a sign to be contradicted, 336 ; uniting joy and suffering, ii. 220 ; hidden life of, 399
John Baptist, St., 92-94
Joseph, St. : commemoration, 11 ; doubt, ii. 148 ; espousals, 10 ; humility, 26, 363, 379 ; obedience to grace, 397 ; prudence, 343, 398 ; office towards us, 15 ; his care of Jesus, 366 ; virtue, 19
Joy : an element of moral beauty, ii. 219 ; our, in Jesus Christ, 240 ; united to suffering, ii. 219-221
Justice, ii. 192-196

Knowledge : Gift of the Holy Ghost, ii. 52 ; of Mary, ii. 58

Legends : Abbot Helsin, 197 ; Our Lady of Good Counsel, 50 ; Our Lady of the Snow, 109
Liberty : use of, ii. 81-85 ; the gift of God, ii. 82
Life, 83 ; of good Christian, 393-395 ; needs and dangers of, 183
Loreto and pilgrimages, 256
Lourdes, Our Lady of, 33
Luxury, 356

Macchabees, father of the, ii. 187
Madonnas, crowning of, 80
Man, Mary's victory in the heart of, 184-186, ii. 241, 277
Magi, 385-389
Magnificat, 332-340
Marriage : and rejoicing, 414 ; and virginity, ii. 202
Mary and God : affinity with, ii. 12, 13 ; maternity, 163-169, ii. 8-18, 45-50, 73 ; primogeniture, ii. 18-25 ; relations with Holy Trinity, 216, ii. 12, 283
Mary and man : our Mother, 430, 434 ; spiritual maternity 15, ii. 243 ; part in our adoption, 7 ; patronage, 182 ; omnipotentia supplex, 184, 245, ii. 252
Mary, gifts and graces of : the gifts of the Holy Ghost, ii. 53 ; preternatural gifts, ii. 55-60 ; sanctifying grace, 267, ii. 30-37 ; actual graces, ii. 65 ; graces gratuitously given, ii. 60-63 ; sacramental graces, ii. 71 ; fullness of grace, 225 ; liberty, ii. 80 ; knowledge, ii. 58 ; infused virtues, ii. 53
Mary, glories of : moral beauty, 173, ii. 216 ; a figure of the Church, ii. 261 ; glory in Heaven, ii. 228 ; in Holy Scripture, ii. 266 ; in history, ii. 274 ; the new Eve, 214, 430, ii. 234, 274 ; her part in redemption, 7, 8, 380, 428 ; ii. 246, 249, 255 ; queen of martyrs, ii. 208 ; her priesthood, 369 ; eternal triumph, ii. 292 ; above Angels and Saints, 168, ii. 278 ; over hearts of men, ii. 241, 277 ; over Hell,

ii. 238; over enemies, ii. 295; virgin of virgins, ii. 205, 274
Mary, privileges of: Assumption, ii. 235; Immaculate Conception, 33-35, 188-255, ii. 38-44; impeccability, ii. 77; incorruptibility, ii. 224; death, 118, ii. 57; predestination, ii. 25; virginity, 171, ii. 201
Mary, virtues of: charity, ii. 149; faith, 327, ii. 96; fortitude, ii. 207; hope, ii. 123; humility, 26, 371, ii. 171; meekness and patience, ii. 211; prudence, 341, ii. 180; religion, ii. 186; temperance, ii. 196
Mary, life of: Nativity, 135; Guardian Angel, ii. 85; name, 141; marriage, 10; spiritual progress, ii. 91; edification, 372; commands Jesus, 400, ii. 13; during the public life, 417; during the Passion, 424; after the Ascension, 433; death, 118, ii. 57
Mary, devotion to: compared with devotion to Sacred Heart of Jesus, 72; fruits of this devotion, 140, 296, 301; novena to acquire it, 266-302; union of devotion to Jesus and Mary, 7, 387; gives glory to God, ii. 8; devotion of the Saints to Mary, ii. 242
Maternity, the Divine: feast, 163; excellence of the dignity, 164, ii. 7-18; how merited, ii. 10; characteristic of Mary, ii. 14-16; Protestant idea of, ii. 1; and faith, ii. 118; and sanctifying grace, ii. 45-49; (Spiritual): nature of, ii. 243-252; our participation in, ii. 246
May, month of, 304-438; how to keep, 273-276
Mediation: of Jesus, 87, ii. 254; of Mary, ii. 252-261
Meditation: method of, xiii; and purity of heart, 133; and sanctification, 402
Meekness, ii. 211-215
Missionaries of the heart of Jesus, 67, 74
Mother: of grace, 74; of the Divine Shepherd, 56; of fair hope, 74

Name of Mary: feast, 141; special holiness of, 142
Nativity of Mary, 135
Neighbours, love of our, 157-162
Novena: for the Assumption, 116; for the Immaculate Conception, 200; to obtain devotion to Mary, 266

Obedience, 396
Offerings, 367
Omnipotentia Supplex, 252
Our Father, ii. 157

Parents: generosity of, to God, 27, 28, 421; duties towards, 401, 403, 421; influence of, over grace of children, ii. 32
Patience: defined, ii. 211-215; of Mary, ii. 198
Patronage: Feast of, 182; nature of, 183
Peacemakers, 95
Perfection, fruit of devotion to Mary, 275
Piety, gift of the Holy Ghost, ii. 51
Pilgrimages, nature and object of, 257
Portiuncula, 104
Praise, vanity of human, 311; how to give and receive, 312
Prayer: continual, 87; perfect, ii. 188; recollection in,

ii. 189 ; of Jesus, 87 ; of the Saints for holy souls, ii. 257
Pride, 337
Priesthood : of Mary, 368, ii. 249 ; of Christians, 369
Primogeniture : of Jesus, 348, ii. 19 ; of Mary, ii. 18
Processions, Divine, ii. 19, 20
Protestantism, ii. 1
Proto-evangel, 194, 206
Providence, ii. 26, 86
Prudence, 341
Purification, Feast of, 24 ; meditations, 25, 365
Purity : of God, ii. 217 ; of Mary, ii. 217 ; acquisition of, ii. 218 ; the source of incorruptibility, ii. 223

Redemption, ii. 248 ; Mary's share in, ii. 246-249
Redemptionists, 18, 185
Religion, ii. 186
Repentance, 405
Reputation, 341
Respect, human, 231, 352, 372
Rosary, 158

Sacraments : use of the, ii. 74 ; Mary and the, ii. 73
Sacred Heart, 67
Sacrifice, 384 ; Mary's, 421 ; its value, 426
Saints : purity of, ii. 219 ; trials of, ii. 221 ; devotion of, to Mary, 288, 299, ii. 242, 275 ; joy caused to, by Mary, 168
Salvation : assured by devotion to Mary, 269 ; pledges of, ii. 29 ; Mary, our, ii. 260
Sanctification : of Mary, ii. 91 ; our own, ii. 93
Scapular, 98
Schism of the West, 91
Scripture, Holy : knowledge of, ii. 266 ; Mary's place in, ii. 262, 266 ; reverence for, ii. 270 ; meaning of, ii. 288
Self-esteem, 359
Sensuality, 356
Shepherds, adoration of, 361
Simeon, 373
Simplicity, 362
Sin : liberty to commit, ii. 81 ; struggle against, ii. 79 ; misery caused by, ii. 153, 168 ; number of our, ii. 76
Singularity, avoidance of, 372
Sub tuum præsidium, 186
Sufferings of Mary and the Saints, 431
Superiors : behaviour towards, 107, 344, 399, 401 duties of, 344, 401
Synaxis, 4

Temperance, ii. 196
Theandric action, ii. 254
Trials : public, 62-66 of the Church, 390

Understanding, gift of the Holy Ghost, ii. 52

Vanity, 354
Veracity, ii. 176
Virginity : God's esteem for, 347 ; of Mary, 166, 171, ii. 201
Virtues : connection between, 41 ; the, in relation to charity, ii. 166 ; to humility, 177
Visitation, 91, 322
Vocation, 420

Wedding of Cana, 413
Widow, the Christian, 382
Will, 407, 427
Wisdom, gift of the Holy Ghost, ii. 52
Word Incarnate : Mary allied to, ii. 286 ; primogeniture of, ii. 19
Word of God, care in keeping, 132, 412

II. MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY GHOST AND FOR CERTAIN MOVEABLE FEASTS.

The figures refer to the pages of the second volume.

Angels, fall of the wicked, 351, 415
Ascension: origin and meaning of the feast, 204; meditations, 403-409
Augustine, St., and the Angel (legend), 413
Authority, pastoral, of the Church, 327

Benignity, fruit of the Holy Ghost, 386
Body of the Christian, temple of the Holy Ghost, 334, 345; destined to rise again, 346; claimed by the Holy Ghost, 344

Charity: fruit of the Holy Ghost, 383; connection with joy and peace, 384
Christian: dignity of, 392; spirit of, 358, 361, 392
Christians, the first, 364
Church: the work of the Holy Ghost, 305; its claims on our love, 324-329; Mary a figure of the, 329; Paradise representing the, 424; trials of the, 363, 397; her patrons, 398
Clemency, fruit of the Holy Ghost, 389
Communion, Holy, 424
Consolation of the Holy Ghost, 320, 356
Continency, fruit of the Holy Ghost, 389
Corpus Christi: origin and meaning of the feast, 420; meditations on, 423; processions of, 427
Counsel, gift of the Holy Ghost, 375

Creation: due to the love of God, 304; attributed to the Holy Ghost, 305

Devotion to the Holy Ghost: its object, 300, 304; its purpose, 305; its value, 306; all, is directed to God, 414; and the present day, 349
Discouragement, 397

Enjoyment of the Holy Ghost, 334, 339, 390
Eucharist, 405; figures of, 424

Fear, gift of the Holy Ghost, 380
Fortitude, gift of the Holy Ghost, 376
Fruits of the Holy Ghost number of, 381; meditations on the, 381-389

Gift, a name of the Holy Ghost, 303; gifts of the Holy Ghost, 365-371; nature of the, 371-381
God: His attributes and holiness, 302; His immensity and omnipresence, 330; to be glorified in our body, 347; possession of, even here, 340
God the Father, 301, 302, 304
God the Son, 301; His incarnation, 305, 308; works attributed to, 304
Good faith, fruit of the Holy Ghost, 388

Holiness, 302; of God, 302; of Christ, 315; of the Christian, 311; of the body of the Christian, 344

Holy Ghost, the: Divinity, procession, names of, 300-303; our comforter, intercessor, teacher, 320, 354-359; our duties towards, 390; crowns the work of Christ, 321; and Jesus Christ, 308-323; the soul of the Church, 324; and the body of the Christian, 343-349; and the Sacraments, 326; works attributed to, 303-305; gifts of, 365-381; fruits of, 381-389; indwelling of, in the just, 329-335; mission of, 305, 315, 323; unction of, 315; promise of, 319; sin against, 306

Immensity of God, 330
Incarnation: attributed to the Holy Ghost, 305, 308; love shown in the, 309; mercy shown in the, 310; necessity of, 311

Jesus Christ: and the Holy Ghost, 314-323, 366; anointed, 315; enriched by the unction of the Holy Ghost, 316; holiness of, 315, 366, 380; Ascension of, 402; condescension of, 405; teaching of, repeated by the Holy Ghost, 358; our relations with, 317; harmony of all His actions, 317, 318
Joseph, St.: devotion to, 391; meditation for Feast of the Patronage of, 393; why called Patriarch, 398; prefigured by the first Joseph, 401
Joy: fruit of the Holy Ghost, 383; connection with charity and peace, 384; value of, 390
Juliana, St., 421, 428; her vision, 421

Knowledge, gift of the Holy Ghost, 377

Language, choice of, 392
Law, contrast of old and new, 361
Longanimity, fruit of the Holy Ghost, 385
Love, name of the Holy Ghost, 302; gifts of Divine, 304; God's threefold, to us, 307

Man, a microcosm of the world, 329
Marriage: what is to be sought in, 348; holiness of, 327; spiritual, of Christ and the Church, 325
Mary: has the Lord with her, 342; a figure of the Church, 329; living for eternity, 352; why not proclaimed patron of the Church, 398
Mass, 326, 425
Materialism, 352
Michael, St., Patron of the Church, 398
Mission: of Jesus Christ, 321; of the Holy Ghost, 304, 314, 321, 333, 353
Morality without the Church, 328
Mystery of the Holy Trinity, 411, 417; of Divine Providence, 418

Nature and grace, 382
Novena for Pentecost, 300-359

Omnipresence of God, 330
Origen, legend of, 345

Peace: fruit of the Holy Ghost, 383; connection with charity and joy, 384
Pentecost, the Christian, 359; the Jewish, 361; Novena for, 300-359; Octave of, 359-393

Persons, Divine : procession of, 300 ; appropriation of works to, 303
Piety, gift of the Holy Ghost, 379 ; marks of true, 382, 389
Pray : under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, 355 ; to the Holy Ghost, 391
Processions of the Blessed Sacrament : their origin, 422 ; their purpose, 427

Rationalism, 350
Resurrection of the body, 346

Spiration, 302

Temple of the Holy Ghost, 333, 344
Trinity, Holy : notion of, 300-303 ; worship of, 414-417 ; honoured in the Holy Ghost, 306 ; feast of, 409 ; meditations for feast of, 411-420 ; mystery of, 411, 417 ; works common to, 303, 339

Understanding, gift of the Holy Ghost, 379

Virtues, completed by gifts of the Holy Ghost, 368

Wisdom : gift of the Holy Ghost, 372 ; human and Divine, 377
Word of God, 301, 302 ; humanity of the, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, 315

III. MEDITATIONS ON ST. JOHN BERCHMANS IN THE SECOND VOLUME

Actions, perfection of ordinary, 434, 452, 455
Affections, 458

Community life, 453
Concupiscences, 444
Consolations, 433

Death of Saints, 456
Devotions, 435 ; to Mary, 436 ; common defects in, 437

Heroism, 452
Holiness, 430 ; desire for, 431 ; within the reach of all, 452
Human respect, 435, 448
Humility, 445 ; the practice of, 456

Illusions to be avoided, 433

Jesuit Saints, 425, 436
John Berchmans, St. : his chastity, 439 ; devotion to Mary Immaculate, 435 ; daily heroism, 452 ; energy, 446 ; independence, 434 ; joy, 449 ; peace, 449 ; regularity, 444 ; sanctity, 431 ; orderly life, 449 ; determination to become a Saint, 432 ; death, 456

Merit, 447

Neighbours : reverence for, 450 ; attention to, 450 ; relations with, 455

Saint, devotion of, 430 ; to Mary, 436 ; chastity of, 439, 443 ; death of, 456
Selfishness, 450

Virginity, 443
Vow to Mary Immaculate, 429

3660
232.931.95
V26
vol. ii
36 Vermeersch, A.
AUTHOR
Medi~~x~~tat~~x~~ions and Instruct
TITLE

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY
BERKELEY CA 94709